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Villagers oppose Parandur airport, boycott polls in TN

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 20 APRIL 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 10 SHAWWAL, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 91 | Pages: 8

Biggest phase sees 62.37% voter turnout

While Tripura recorded highest turnout of 80.77%, Bihar was at the bottom with just 48.7% voters

J&K votes for first time since 370 abrogation

Jammu, 19 April

In the first major electoral battle in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, Udhampur constituency witnessed enthusiastic voters' participation as the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls began Friday. The electors said they now want assembly polls to be held before 30 September deadline set by Supreme Court. "People voted with enthusiasm despite pouring rain. And you will see the enthusiasm reaching its crescendo during the Assembly elections," said a voter. Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is presently run by Lt Governor-led administration after the PDP-BJP government collapsed in June, 2018 with the national party pulling out of alliance. The last Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir were held in 2014. While the voters mostly talked about the issues related to their rights, development and national agenda, they also listed out certain demands: restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, holding of assembly elections, as well as Urban Local Bodies polls.—*PTI*

Officials in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda carry a specially-abled woman on a handmade stretcher to the voting booth
PHOTO: Photo X/@DCDODAOFFICIAL

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

A voter turnout of over 62.37 per cent was recorded in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections covering 102 seats across 21 states and Union territories. This was amid sporadic incidents of violence in some places.

The Election Commission said polling for the first and biggest phase of the seven-phase elections remained largely peaceful. Voters braved the heat in most parts while at some places, they waited patiently in pouring rain as the world's largest poll exercise got underway at 7 am.

Tripura recorded the highest turnout of 80.77 per cent. However, Bihar was the lowest.

Assembly elections were also held simultaneously in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. In Tamil Nadu, voting was delayed by an hour in some polling booths in the state such as the one near Tambaram due to technical glitches in the electronic voting machines.

In Arunachal Pradesh the turnout was moderate in the morning hours due to inclement weather; it gathered momentum with weather conditions improving.

In a few polling stations in the state, polling was delayed as the electronic voting machines (EVMs) developed technical snags which were later replaced, Chief Electoral Officer Pawan Kumar Sain said.

Supporters of two candidates clashed near a polling station in the Bameng constituency in East Kameng district, Inspector General of Police (Law & Order) Chukhu Apa said, adding the situation was brought under control and polling is continuing.

Incidents of EVM damage were also reported from three polling stations in East Kameng, Kurung Kumey and Upper Subansiri districts, the police officer said.

In Andaman and Nicobar Islands there were some minor EVM glitches but it was addressed immediately.

For the first time in the Union territory, seven members of the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group of Great Nicobar Islands voted for the lone Lok Sabha seat.

Assam also reported EVM malfunctioning at three polling booths of Bihpuria in Lakhimpur, one each in Hojai, Kaliabor and Bokakhat, and one in Naharkatia of Dibrugarh, an official said.

A vehicle carrying an EVM partially sank into a river after water level rose suddenly, washing away a mechanised boat that was ferrying the SUV in Lakhimpur constituency. Braving incessant rains, voters exercised their choice in the first six hours of polling in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur parliamentary constituency.

Over 16.63 crore people are eligible to vote in this phase. In the first phase, there are 35.67 lakh first time voters, besides 3.51 crore young voters in the age group of 20-29 years. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3 & 4

A LOOK AT INDIA'S VOTER TURNOUT

TRIPURA	80.77%
WEST BENGAL	77.89%
SIKKIM	76.62%
PUDUCHERRY	75.33%
MEGHALAYA	74.50%
ASSAM	72.53%
MANIPUR	69.88%
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	68.72%
TAMIL NADU	68.54%
CHHATTISGARH	67.56%
MADHYA PRADESH	67.08%
JAMMU & KASHMIR	66.26%
ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS	63.99%
MAHARASHTRA	61.06%
UTTAR PRADESH	60.14%
LAKSHADWEEP	59.02%
Rajasthan	57.26%
NAGALAND	56.91%
UTTARAKHAND	55.43%
MIZORAM	54.23%
BIHAR	48.73%

Approx turnout till 11pm | Source: ECI

3 killed as miscreants open fire in Manipur

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, 19 APRIL

Three people reportedly died after miscreants opened fired at Thamnapokpi polling station on Friday. Vandalism was reported in East Imphal district. Incidents of firing, intimidation, destruction of EVMs at some polling booths and allegations of booth capturing were also reported from conflict-hit Manipur.

The state, which has been reeling under the conflict of ethnic violence since May last year, has traditionally seen a very high voter turnout. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the state recorded a turnout of 82 per cent. Voting took place in two constituencies--Inner Manipur (32 assembly segments) and Outer Manipur (15 assembly segments)- on Friday.

According to sources, the incidents of EVMs being destroyed were reported from at least four polling booths by unidentified miscreants in Imphal East and Imphal West.

"An EVM machine was set ablaze at Moirangkampu Sajeb in Khurai constituency in Imphal East district and a 65-year-old man was also shot at by some unidentified gunmen. There has also been vandalism in at least one more polling station, in Uripok in Imphal West," an official said.

Booth Level Officer for Moirangkampu Sajeb, Surbala Devi said, "Suddenly two men came and asked for polling agents of Congress and BJP. They took the Congress agent outside by holding his hand. Then the two men fired shots at him from inside the car."

Police officials also said that some unidentified armed men intimidated election agents of a particular political party at different places, including Uripok and Iroishemba in Imphal West district, and asked them to leave the polling stations.

At Kiyamgei in Imphal East district's Keirao constituency, armed men fired blank shots and intimidated some polling agents. An altercation broke out between voters and unidentified men at Khongman Zone 4 in Imphal East district, leading to damage to EVMs.

BJP's state unit general secretary K Sarat Kumar alleged that Akoijam, accompanied by his supporters, visited several polling stations and provoked officials. —*PTI*

Armed men also fired several rounds in the air near a polling booth in Thamnapokpi in Manipur on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

Sporadic incidents of violence mar Bengal polls

COOCH BEHAR/KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

Sporadic incidents of violence marred the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in the three parliamentary constituencies in Bengal, as TMC and BJP workers clashed with each other in various parts of violence-prone Cooch Behar seat.

Both TMC and BJP lodged 80 and 39 complaints, respectively, related to poll violence, voter intimidation, and assaults on poll agents, sources from both parties said. Most of the complaints were from Cooch Behar and Alipurduars constituencies.

All three seats are reserved, with Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri for SCs and Alipurduars for STs.

TMC alleged that BJP workers had thrashed polling agents in Sitalkuchi area of Cooch Behar constituency and voters were stopped from entering few booths. The saffron camp denied the allegations and accused TMC of intimidating voters. Sitalkuchi, one of the most violence-prone areas of the state, witnessed widespread violence during the last Assembly polls, leading to the death of four people in firing by central forces.In Mathabhanga TMC President from Bethguri, Anant Barman, was hospitalised. Five BJP workers were injured and hospitalised after being attacked by TMC members, a district BJP leader said. —*PTI*

ZERO VOTER TURNOUT IN 6 NAGALAND DISTRICTS AMID CALL FOR SHUTDOWN

KOHIMA, 19 APRIL

Polling personnel in six eastern districts of Nagaland waited for nine hours in booths, but not one of the four lakh voters of the region turned up following a shutdown call given by an organisation to press for its demand for 'Frontier Nagaland Territory' (FNT).

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Friday affirmed that the state government does not have any problem with the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation's (ENPO) demand for FNT as it has already recommended autonomous powers for the region.

Officials said there is no movement of people or vehicles on major streets in eastern Nagaland except those of the district administrations and other emergency services.

Additional Chief Electoral Officer of Nagaland Awa Loring said polling personnel were present between 7am and 4pm in the 738 polling stations but none came up to cast votes in those nine hours. Speaking to reporters after casting his vote at his village in Touphema, some 41 km on the outskirts of the state capital, Rio said he accepted the draft working paper for FNT, which was handed over to him in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. —*PTI*

Jawan on poll duty killed in Ch'garh

A 32-year-old jawan of CRPF deployed on poll duty in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district was killed on Friday when a shell of Under Barrel Grenade Launcher (UBGL) exploded accidentally. The incident took place when a team of security personnel was out on an area domination operation half a km away from a polling booth. —*PTI*

150 EVM sets replaced in Assam

A total of 150 complete EVM sets were replaced due to malfunctioning across the five Lok Sabha seats in Assam where voting is underway on Friday. Besides, more than 400 components such as VVPATs and ballot units of different EVMs were also replaced because of snags. Most of the glitches were noticed during the mock polling, which started 90 minutes before the commencement of the actual voting. —*PTI*

AI suspends Tel Aviv flights till 30 April post floods

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Air India on Friday said its flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended till 30 April amid tensions in Middle East. The airline operates four weekly flights between the national capital and the Israeli city. "Air India flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended until 30th April 2024, in view of the emerging situation in the Middle East. We are continuously monitoring the situation," an airline spokesperson said in a statement. The airline is offering one-time waiver on rescheduling and cancellation charges for passengers who have confirmed bookings for travel to and from Tel Aviv during this period. —*PTI*

Sec 144 in Kodagu after BJP man dies in accident

MADIKERI, 19 APRIL

Section 144 of CrPC was imposed in Kodagu for the death of a BJP worker in Valnoor village of Kushalanagar taluk. The victim, Ramappa, who was involved in an election campaign died in the hit-and-run accident.

According to the police, the accused driver, Arshad was nabbed and an FIR has been filed under Section 302 (punishment for murder) of the IPC against him. Following the incident, BJP leaders and workers gathered at the spot to protest, alleging that the incident was intentional. The protesters blocked the road, shouting slogans, while police officers attempted to calm the situation. An. One person has been arrested in connection with the incident so far. BJP leader CT Ravi visited spot and alleged the State government supporting jihadi elements. Reacting to the death of the BJP worker MP Pratap Simha issued a warning to voters. He stated that if people vote for Congress, it would be akin to voting for a "Taliban government." — *Salar News*

Ramappa, who was involved in an election campaign died in the hit-and-run accident ***PHOTO: PTI***

40 TRAINS CANCELLED

Trains hit as ryots sit on tracks

AMBALA, 19 APRIL

Rail traffic on Ambala-Amritsar route was hit as farmers squatted on rail tracks in Shambhu near the Punjab-Haryana border for the third day on Friday, demanding the release of three farmers arrested by Haryana Police.

About 40 trains have been cancelled, while the routes of 54 trains have been diverted, they said. The farmers have been protesting under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) in Patiala district's Shambhu.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said the protest will continue until the three farmers are released. SKM (Non-Political) and KMM are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by farmers to press the government to accept their demands, including legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

The farmers have been staying put at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points
PHOTO: PTI

The farmers have been staying put at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points since 13 February when their march was stopped by the security forces. —*PTI*

46K ELDERLY VOTE FROM HOME IN KARNATAKA

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Over 95 per cent (46,577) of the 48,609 senior citizens aged above 85 and persons with disabilities, who had opted to vote from home, have exercised their franchise in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka that go to the polls on 26 April according to a press release from India Post. Vote-from-home facility ended on Thursday in the 14 constituencies. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Parts of City get 1st showers of the season

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

After almost five months of dry spells, parts of Bengaluru received moderate rains on Friday, bringing respite to denizens battling the unusual scorching heat in the capital City. The rains were reported from Yelahanka, Hesaraghatta, Chikkabanawara and Kengeri, among others. As showers entered the City, Bengalureans expressed happiness on social media. Weather blogger Bengaluru weatherman (@Bnglrweatherman) wrote on X: "Finally the much-awaited rains have entered Bengaluru City. Showers are being reported over Yelahanka now. Down town Bengaluru South is getting darker. Interesting hours ahead." Meanwhile, the sky at some places in Bengaluru was covered with dark clouds on Friday, but they did not get the first showers of the year. India Meteorological Department (IMD) had predicted rainfall for Bengaluru from 18 April. The last recorded instance of rain in India's Silicon Valley occurred on 24-25 November 2023, as reported by Karnataka Weatherman forecaster on X. Meteorological experts have attributed the ongoing hot and dry weather in Bengaluru to El Nino conditions prevailing in the region. *—Salar News*

Youth assaulted over pro-Modi song in Mysuru

MYSURU, 19 APRIL

A man was allegedly assaulted by a group of youth in Mysuru for reportedly writing and singing a song in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The incident took place near government guest house in Mysuru. The victim Rohit, who filed a complaint at the Lakshmipuram police station, claimed that he was also threatened by the group not to sing it again. The assailants reportedly fled the scene after physically assaulting and tearing his clothes. Rohit also shared a video of the incident on social media and urged authorities to take action against the miscreants. *—Salar News*

Elderly tourist from B'luru goes missing in Goa

PANAJI, 19 APRIL

A 62-year-old man from Bengaluru went missing while on a trip to Dudhsagar waterfall in South Goa, on Thursday. Abdul Rafique and his wife hired a jeep to visit the waterfall, and he went missing during the trip, a senior official said. The police launched an extensive search operation in the area, along with other passengers who had accompanied Rafique in the jeep. The couple were staying in a hotel at Varca in South Goa, adding that a missing person's complaint has been lodged at Collem police station. *—PTI*

RCB restores 3 lakes as part of 'Go Green Initiative'

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Professional franchise cricket team Royal Challengers Bengaluru has restored three lakes in Bengaluru, a City grappling with a severe water crisis. RCB launched the Lake Improvement Works Project in October 2023 as part of "RCB Go Green Initiative". The project focused developing Ittgalpura and Sadenahalli lakes, located in highly water-stressed areas. These areas lack access to Kaveri River water and rely entirely on groundwater and surface water with borewell depths ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 feet.

According to a statement, more than 1,20,000 tons of silt and sand have been removed from the two lakes and nine acres of lake land have been recovered, leading to the creation of stabilisation ponds and wetlands that benefit the local bird and animal populations. Experts say Bengaluru is one of the fastest-growing Cities in the world, and its infrastructure for fresh water supply is struggling to keep up with the growing population. *—PTI*

Student's murder in Hubballi sparks protests

BJP alleges love jihad, Cong says murder over personal reasons

HUBBALLI, 19 APRIL

The murder of city Corporation Councillor's daughter in the campus of her college sparked widespread condemnation and protests.

The issue has snowballed into a political slugfest between Congress and BJP. While the ruling party has tried to project it as an incident with a personal angle, the saffron party suspects love jihad and has said that it shows the deterioration of law and order.

BJP's student wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and other Right wing organisations protested. In Hubballi, ABVP called for a shutdown of all colleges and urged students to participate in the protest.

In Belagavi, ABVP activists blocked roads and demanded action the accused. Protesters in Raichur gathered in front of the District Collector's office, seeking enhanced security in colleges and urged for a CBI probe. In Bengaluru, students gathered at Mysuru Bank Circle. However, they were detained by the police.

Neha Hiremath, 23, daughter of Congress Councillor of Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation Niranjan Hiremath, was stabbed to death in BVB College on Thursday. The accused Fayaz Khondunaik, who fled the scene, was arrested by police.

People attend the funeral of Neha Hiremath (inset) who was stabbed to death, in Hubballi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Neha was a first year student of Master of Computer Applications and Fayaz was earlier her classmate.

According to police, Fayaz, who stabbed her multiple times, claimed during interrogation the two had been in a relationship but she had been avoiding him of late.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said personal reasons were behind the murder. "The law and order situation in Karnataka is good. It is the duty of the government to maintain law and order of the state, and we are doing it."

However, Neha's father, slammed the chief minister and said, "This isn't just a personal murder. The investigation should not be swayed; this wasn't a personal murder," Hiremath stated.

Siddaramaiah also convened a meeting with Director General of Police Alok Mohan and Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayanand and directed them to take preventive measures to ensure such incidents don't recur.

He appealed for peace and said that no one should get worked up and take the law into their hands or disturb the peace.

Meanhile, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi suspected that there was a love jihad angle behind the incident.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said there was no "love jihad" angle.

He said, when such incidents happen, BJP routinely blames Congress, which is not right.

"Viewing everything with a political angle at the time of elections is not right. They (BJP) cannot dictate to investigate in a certain way and to invoke certain sections," he added.

Calling this a shocking incident, BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai noted that as far as he could remember such a daylight murder on a college campus with a knife had never happened in Hubballi. He further said the government has to take this very seriously as "this is not an issue concerning any individual and that it concerns the entire state."

"A high-level inquiry has to be done, it cannot be done by the local police here, as everyone here in Hubballi-Dharwad including the commissioner is inactive. A special investigation team should be formed," he said.

Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner had yesterday said, the girl was stabbed as she rejected the accused's love proposal, but the Home Minister today says they were in love, Bommai pointed out, adding, "This shows that the government is trying to look at it with a political and vote-bank angle." *—Salar News*

TRAGEDY BEFORE WEDDING

The victims Parashuram Hadimani, Akanksha Hadimani, Lakshmi Hadimani and Karthik Prakash Bakale *PHOTO: SALAR*

4 of family found murdered in Gadag

GADAG, 19 APRIL

Four people of a family were allegedly found murdered in the district headquarter town of Gadag early on Friday.

The incident occurred at around 2.30 am today at Dasara Oni in Gadag town, police said.

The deceased are Karthik Prakash Bakale, 27; Parashuram Hadimani, 55; Lakshmi Hadimani, 45; and Akanksha Hadimani, 16.

Karthik is the son of BJP leader Prakash Hadimani. His mother Sunanda is the Gadag-Betageri City Municipal Council vice president.

Karthik's was allegedly supposed to get married on 17 April and Hadimani's family had come to attend the event.

- Karthik is the son of BJP leader Prakash Hadimani. His mother Sunanda is the Gadag-Betageri City Municipal Council vice president

"Investigation is on. We will soon nab the culprits. Probably the criminals gained entry through the open terrace of the building and perpetrated the crime," Gadag Superintendent of Police Babasaheb Nemgoud told reporters. Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil visited the bereaved family members and offered his condolence. *—PTI*

Voters wash Yaduveer's feet, perform special pooja

MYSURU, 19 APRIL

Voters in Mysuru's Krishnaraja area washed the feet of BJP Lok Sabha candidate Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar and performed padad pooja. The Lok Sabha polls race in Mysuru-Kodagu constituency is heating up with candidates from various parties intensifying their campaign. Congress candidate M Lakshman undertook a voting drive in Madikeri recently to garner support.

Wadiyar, a NDA candidate, led a roadshow in Mysuru on Friday where a group of priest blessed Yaduveer and predicted his certain victory.

Meanwhile, Congress candidate DK Suresh's supporters scaled Chamundeshwari Hill to perform a special pooja for his victory. Around 300 members of the Brothers' fan club visited the temple praying for DK Suresh's win and hoping for Congress' victory in all 28 constituencies.

Madamma, a resident told Salar News, "Congress government is providing Rs 2,000 monthly assistance to those without land like us. What has BJP done for the poor? Congress has empowered women with their programmes. They provide us with financial assistance without burdening our families. Congress has fulfilled its promises with initiatives such as free bus services and electricity. *—Salar News*

Yaduveer led a roadshow in Mysuru where a group of priests blessed him and predicted his certain victory *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

POLL STORIES

BJP leader Malikaiah Guttedar joined Congress in presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and KPCC President DK Shivakumar in Bengaluru on Friday; BJP supporters take part in a campaign rally for Bengaluru North candidate Shobha Karandlaje at Vrushabhavathi Nagar *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Sowmya wants to be City's 1st woman MP

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Bengaluru never had a woman MP, and Sowmya Reddy of Congress wants to make history, she told PTI.

Politics is not something new for the 41-year-old who had served as MLA of Jayanagar and was heart-broken when she lost by a mere 16 votes in her re-election bid in this City constituency in the Assembly elections last year.

She is taking on MP and BJP Youth Wing Chief Tejasvi Surya in Bengaluru South, which is a BJP stronghold. But Sowmya -- daughter of Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy -- remains unperturbed. Sowmya alleged that Surya, President of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, has not only spread hate and indulged in divisive politics but also did not speak up for State in Parliament.

Some challenges women candidates face, she said it's a patriarchal world and that's precisely why she got into electoral politics.

Representation of women is needed, she said and acknowledged that people, party cadre and elected representatives have been extremely supportive. *—PTI*

Congress targets BJP with 'Chombu' ads

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Rival Congress and BJP in Karnataka on Friday sparred over the former's 'Chombu' analogy in print advertisements targeting the saffron party, with both accusing each other of having done nothing for the State. 'Chombu' means pot in Kannada.

The exchange between the two parties erupted following Congress's sarcasm-laced campaign alleging that Modi government's gift to Karnataka was 'Chombu', which symbolises deception and emptiness.

"The contribution of 27 BJP and JD(S) MPs to the State is Chombu. Let's give Chombu to BJP in this election," the ruling party said, in an appeal to the voters of the State.

Leader of Opposition in Karnataka assembly R Ashoka targeted Congress over the water scarcity in City, alleged it was unable to give even a pot of water to the people of Bengaluru this summer. It was now misleading people with such an advertisement.

Parliamentary polls will be held in two phases in Karnataka on 26 April and 7 May. *—PTI*

B'LURU RURAL: KNOW YOUR CANDIDATE

Centre holding back health, education projects: DK Suresh

Meanwhile, BJP is fielding ex-Jayadeva Hospital head Dr CN Manjunath to shore up health infrastructure

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Bengaluru Rural constituency is witnessing one of the fiercest contests in Lok Sabha elections in the State this year. To trounce the sitting Congress MP, DK Suresh, BJP has fielded Dr CN Manjunath who retired as head of government-run Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research here.

The Bengaluru Rural seat comprises agrarian zones in Kunigal, Channapatna, Ramanagara, Magadi and Kanakapura taluks as well as IT corridor of Electronics City in Bengaluru. The rural belts in the constituency have limited healthcare and education facilities. BJP's ploy to deploy a popular doctor as a candidate is aimed at shoring up health infrastructure in the region. The brother of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said Centre is responsible for the plight of the constituency. Suresh said they have proposed a line of projects including hospitals in each industrial zone, a medical college in Kanakapura and new schools. The BJP-led Centre is not clearing the projects and they are also diverting the investors on education to healthcare to North India, Suresh said in an interview with **Salar News**.

D K SURESH

INTERVIEW

- I have vowed to complete the current and planned irrigation projects

Is this election your toughest because of BJP-JD(S) combine candidate contesting against you?
Not really. I started my campaign a month before and while interacting with the villagers who have benefitted from Congress guarantees, they told me that they would continue to trust us.

I am reaching out to the voters based on my performance and the five guarantee schemes of our government. I have vowed to complete the current and planned irrigation projects to ensure there is a drinking water supply to all.

Dr Manjunath is known for his commendable service in medical field. How do you plan to address healthcare concerns during your campaign, considering the potential inclination of villagers towards your opponent on such matters?
The limited healthcare infrastructure in my constituency doesn't imply that our voters will automatically turn to BJP for healthcare provisions. Congress government has lined up a host of projects. Using corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, we aim to establish 200-bed hospitals in each industrial zone, and the 20-odd medical colleges in the City will be linked to Community Health Centres and Primary Health Centres to enhance healthcare accessibility. However, the State is awaiting approval from the Centre as they don't care about Bengaluru's development.

Rajarajeshwarinagar and Bengaluru South are strongholds of BJP and Ramanagara and Channapatna are JD(S). How are you planning to retain the seat
The voters have seen 10 years of Modi government and the attention our state received from Centre. When Rajarajeshwarinagar was suffering from water problems, it was not the NDA alliance that came forward to help, it was our government that ensured the supply of water. JD(S) has lost the trust of voters after they joined BJP.

Given the water crisis in Bengaluru Rural, how do you propose to address this pressing issue, especially considering reports of farmers having to travel long distances for water?
By 13 August, Anekal, Kunigal and other Assembly segments, which suffered from the water crisis, will get Cauvery water and they don't have to worry about the insufficient water. *—Salar News*

DK SURESH, 57

Seat: Bengaluru Rural

Congress

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES:
Kunigal, Rajarajeshwarinagar, Bengaluru South, Anekal, Magadi, Ramanagara, Kanakapura, Channapatna

Total assets	2019	2024
	₹338 cr	₹593 cr

Criminal cases
5 in 2019
3 in 2024

2019 Election results
Winner: DK Suresh (Cong)
Won by **8.78** lakh votes

Loser: Ashwathnarayan Gowda (BJP)
Lost by **6.71** lakh votes

Education
2nd PUC

VOTER TURNOUT
64.98%

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and his wife show their fingers marked with indelible ink after casting their votes in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

Villagers oppose Parandur airport, boycott polls in TN

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

Lok Sabha election in Tamil Nadu on Friday was boycotted by villagers opposed to the Parandur airport project near here and by people at Vegaivayal in Pudukkottai district to mark their protest over non-arrest of perpetrators in the human faeces incident of 2022 that shocked the state.

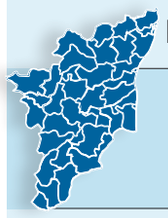
Villagers belonging to Ekanapuram and other nearby areas including Nagapattu under the Parandur panchayat, close to Sriperumbudur, who are opposed to the the greenfield airport project abstained from voting.

When a government revenue department official visited Ekanapuram village to "convince some government servants" to vote, it led to a fracas as villagers surrounded the official and opposed his visit.

Local people alleged "some government employees" were pressured by authorities to vote and condemned the action.

People belonging to Vengaivayal and Eraiyur villages in Pudukkottai district, both Dalits and caste Hindus, boycotted the LS polls. Villagers protested by pinning black pieces of clothes on their clothes, some covered their mouth using black cloth and others held black flag poles demanding justice. *—PTI*

TAMIL NADU



Phases: **1**

39 Seats in phase 1

6.23 cr Total voters

'Kidnapping', clashes and booth-storming mar WB polls

COOCH BEHAR, 19 APRIL

Sporadic incidents of violence marred the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in the three parliamentary constituencies in Bengal, as TMC and the BJP workers clashed with each other in Bengal.

Television footage showed that in Mathabhanga area of the district, TMC and BJP workers clashed, resulting in injuries on both sides. Workers from both parties confronted each other following allegations of voter intimidation. In another area of Mathabhanga, TMC workers staged a protest following allegations that central forces were assisting BJP workers in rigging votes at some booths in the area. The district BJP unit denied the allegations and claimed that in many areas, they have been at the receiving end of violence.

BJP said that in the Cooch Behar South area, party members were kidnapped by TMC members, and polling agents were prevented from entering booths.

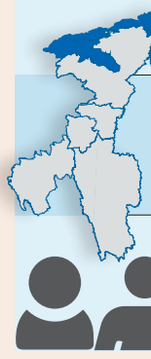
In Mathabhanga area, five BJP workers were injured and hospitalised after being attacked by TMC members, a district BJP leader said.

In the same area, the saffron camp also alleged that TMC workers visited households to intimidate voters.

In Chandmari area, BJP workers alleged that voters were not allowed to enter booths, and TMC members had taken control of polling stations to rig the elections. *—PTI*

Election officials take the votes of citizens at their residences in West Bengal's Dakshin Dinajpur district **PHOTO: PTI**

WEST BENGAL



Phases: **7**

3 Seats in phase 1

52.26 lakh Total voters

Voter gives her thumb impression before casting her vote in Gaya **PHOTO: PTI**

Peaceful polling in Bihar, heatwave hits total turnout

PATNA, 19 APRIL

First phase of Lok Sabha polls in four constituencies passed off peacefully in Bihar on Friday.

However, the prevailing heatwave condition resulted in a low voter turnout.

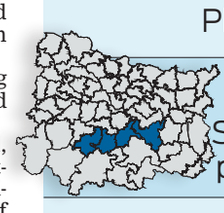
In Gaya, Aurangabad, Nawada and Jamui seats, voters sealed the fate of 38 candidates, including former chief minister and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) founder Jitan Ram Manjhi.

"Voting began at 7am amid tight security," said H R Srinivasa, Chief Electoral Officer. The total voter turnout in these four Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 general elections was 53.47 per cent.

Adequate forces were deployed to check any untoward incidents in the constituencies. "We took the assistance of the Indian Air Force in ferrying polling officials with the help of helicopter in the affected Chakar Bandha forest in Aurangabad district," he added.

He said voters boycotted polling at seven booths in Aurangabad and Nawada because of certain local issues. Altogether eight candidates are in the fray in Nawada, though the contest is primarily between Vivek Thakur, a BJP Rajya Sabha MP seeking entry into the Lok Sabha, and RJD's Shravan Kushwaha. *— PTI*

BIHAR



Phases: **7**

4 Seats in phase 1

75 lakh Total voters

CRPF man killed in blast, officer hurt in Ch'garh

RAIPUR/JAGDALPUR, 19 APRIL

Chhattisgarh's Naxal-affected Bastar Lok Sabha constituency saw the death of a CRPF constable after a grenade accidentally went off and injury to an officer in an IED blast.

Polling in the Bastar seat started at 7 am and was held in different time slots amid tight security in the first phase of elections.

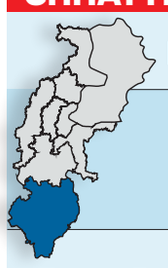
Residents of 56 villages cast their vote in polling booths set up in their own village for the first time in Lok Sabha elections, he informed.

A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan deployed on security duty was killed when a shell of an under-barrel grenade launcher (UBGL) accidentally exploded in Galgam village under Usoor police station limits in Bijapur district, a police official said.

Officials said long queues of voters were witnessed at several polling stations in Dantewada, Bijapur and Bastar districts. A newly married couple, Devesh Thakur and Gangotri Thakur, was the cynosure of all eyes as they came to vote at Guriya booth in Naraynapur district in their wedding attire.

Defying a poll boycott call by Naxalites in Bastar district, villagers were seen queuing up to cast their votes in the polling booth there. *—PTI*

CHHATTISGARH



Phases: **3**

1 Seats in phase 1

14.72 lakh Total voters

Newly wed, elderly beat R'than heat

JAIPUR, 19 APRIL

Voters on Friday sealed the fate of over 114 candidates in fray for the first phase of polling here.

Elderly citizens and some newly married couples were also seen at the polling booths.

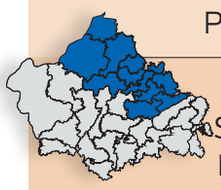
Shivani, a resident of Dampura village in Dholpur district, reached her polling booth before entering the wedlock. Dressed in bridal attire, she also took a selfie at a 'selfie point' after casting her vote.

In Jaipur, a 95-year-old retired naval officer reached a polling station with his family members to vote. He said although he could have chosen the 'voting from home' option, he preferred to cast his vote at a polling station. Newlywed Rohit and Sonia Chaudhary went to a polling station in Jaipur' Purani Basti to cast their votes.

Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot and other leaders cast their votes in the initial hours. Mishra and his wife Satyawati Mishra cast their votes at a polling booth in C Scheme.

Bhajanlal expressed confidence that the NDA will win over 400 seats across the country in this general election. Pilot said people want change and this election was going to be for change in the country. *— PTI*

RAJASTHAN



Phases: **2**

12 Seats in phase 1

2.54 cr Total voters

MP officials honour voters with garlands

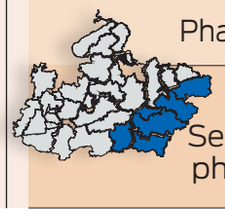
BHOPAL, 19 APRIL

Poll officials in Madhya Pradesh on Friday put their best foot forward to ensure high voting in the Lok Sabha elections with initiatives like offering flowers and applying 'tilak' on the foreheads of those exercise their franchise.

Voting is underway in Balaghat, Chhindwara, Jabalpur, Mandla, Shahdol and Sidhi Lok Sabha seats in the state. In Shahdol, poll staff welcomed elderly voters with flowers and garlands and applied tilak, leaving several of those who braved the heat to exercise their franchise very happy, eyewitnesses said. In tribal Mandla district's Nainpur's Makke booth no. 55, youth Durgesh Bhanvre came to vote with turmeric smeared on his face and clothes after taking part in pre-wedding rituals.

vA bunch of transgender persons voted in the afternoon in booth number 161 in Kohaliya in Junnardeo, which is part of Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat. Kavita, who got married on Thursday night in Bemhori village in Shahdol's Budhar tehsil, ensured she voted before leaving for her marital home in Padmania village. Kavita cast her vote in her wedding attire, a kin said, adding her parents and in-laws were happy with her decision. *— PTI*

MADHYA PRADESH



Phases: **4**

6 Seats in phase 1

11.30 lakh Total voters

'Silent hamlet' votes for basic amenities in J&K

DHADKAHI, 19 APRIL

The residents of Dhadkahi, known as the "silent village" in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district due to its large deaf-and-dumb population, exercised their right to vote in the Lok Sabha polls on Friday in the hope of getting basic amenities, such as roads, water, healthcare facilities and education.

However, they warned of boycotting future elections if their demands are not met.

Located amidst snow-clad mountains, Dhadkahi is primarily inhabited by members of the Gujjar community, known for their agricultural practices and nomadic lifestyle. The unique characteristic of the village is that more than half of its population has faced challenges in hearing and speaking due to congenital medical conditions since 1950. The villagers emphasised the need for immediate attention to their issues, including teachers for a primary school and linking the hamlet with the road network.

With the help of Hanief, Rahil Ali, a deaf-and-mute father of five kids, stressed the importance of a school for children with similar conditions. Dhadkahi is home to about 4,500 Gujjars. The first case of hearing-and-speech impairment was reported in the village in 1939. *— PTI*

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Phases: **5**

1 Seats in phase 1

16.23 lakh Total voters

UP villagers threaten to boycott polls over man-animal conflict & no roads

A woman shows her finger marked with indelible ink after casting her vote at a polling station in Kairana on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

LUCKNOW, 19 APRIL

People in some areas of Pilibhit district announced a poll boycott as a protest against the lack of civic amenities. The residents of Purana village, located in the Barkheda Police station limits, said they would not vote in protest against the absence of a bridge in the area.

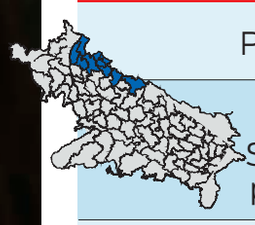
Residents of Dahgala, Bakshpur and nearby villages boycotted voting as the road leading to the villages through the officers' colony has allegedly been blocked.

In the Neuria area of the district, some villagers initially said they would not vote as they were aggrieved over the issue of man-animal conflict. They alleged that tigers from the adjoining Pilibhit Tiger Reserve venture out of the forest and kill villagers but nothing have been done by the administration to prevent such incidents.

Pilibhit District Magistrate Sanjay Kumar Singh said, "We received information that some villagers are boycotting the polls over local issues. The officials concerned visited these villages and spoke to them." Following assurances from the local administration, the villagers visited the polling stations to vote.

A bride was seen reaching the polling station in her wedding dress. Later, some people were seen reaching polling centres wearing scarfs and holding umbrellas to beat the heat. *— PTI*

UTTAR PRADESH



Phases: **7**

8 Seats in phase 1

1.43 cr Total voters

INKED & PROUD

Clockwise from top left: A man carries an elderly voter as she arrives to cast her vote in Muzaffarnagar; World's shortest woman Jyoti Amge casts her vote in Nagpur; Women voters show their ink-marked fingers after casting votes at Barwada village in Jaipur; Dindori Baiga tribal women cast their votes in Dindori, Madhya Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

PUDUCHERRY SEES VVPAT SNAG; PINK BOOTHS A HIT

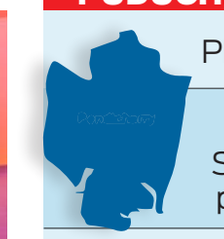
PUDUCHERRY, 19 APRIL

A visit to some of the polling stations in the rural areas brought to the fore a mixed picture of voter turnout, which was mediocre in some places and high in others.

Kothandapani, 89, along with his 86-year-old wife Krishnammal turned up at a booth in the Veerampattinam coastal village in Ariyankuppam Assembly constituency to cast their votes. Kothandapani is the grandfather of the AIADMK contestant G Tamizhvendhan, family sources told media at the booth. In one of the polling stations in Mudaliarpet assembly constituency, the VVPAT developed some snag and there was a delay of 45 minutes in the commencement of polling

The green environment at a booth housed on the premises of the more-than-century-old VOC Government Boys school in the town added to the lustre of the arrangements. *— PTI*

PUDUCHERRY

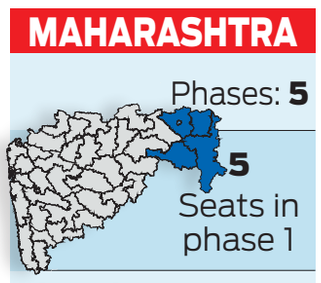


Phases: **1**

1 Seats in phase 1

10.20 lakh Total voters

MAHARASHTRA



Phases: **5**

5 Seats in phase 1

95 lakh Total voters

Snake spreads panic at M'rashtra booth

NAGPUR, 19 APR

Maharashtra saw voters turn out in large numbers as 97 candidates, including Union minister Nitin Gadkari, are in the fray in Nagpur, Ramtek (SC), Bhandara-Gondia, Chandrapur and Naxal-hit Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST) constituency, all in eastern-most parts of the state.

A snake on the premises of the KDK College here briefly disrupted polling at the booth there, said the person who rescued the reptile.

To avoid technical snags cropping up in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in remote polling booths in Gadchiroli, three spare machines were dispatched by a helicopter to the Sironcha area of the district, another official said. Polling in the 43 other Lok Sabha seats will be held in four more phases later this month and in May. In Nagpur, there is a direct fight between senior BJP leader Gadkari, seeking a third term, and Congress candidate Vikas Thakre. The high-profile constituency, housing the RSS headquarters, has 22,18,259 voters — 11,10, 840 male, 11,07,197 female and 222 transgender persons. *—PTI*

Transgender voter Vidya Kamble (green saree) clicks a selfie with a fellow voter after casting votes in Nagpur on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

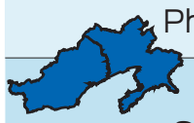
At least 20 injured in gun fight in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, 19 APRIL

At least 20 people were injured in the gun fight in poll-related violence in Arunachal Pradesh on polling day in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections. Supporters of two candidates clashed near a polling station in the Bameng constituency in East Kameng district, Inspector General of Police Chukhu Apa said, adding that the situation was brought under control and polling is continuing.

Incidents of EVM damage were also reported from three polling stations in East Kameng, Kurung Kumey and Upper Subansiri districts, the police officer said. The turnout, which was moderate in the morning hours due to inclement weather, improved later in the day. In few polling stations, voting goVW t delayed in the morning as the electronic voting machines developed a technical snag, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Sain said. The unique Malogam polling station recorded cent per cent polling with the lone female voter, exercising her constitutional right on Friday, officials said. The 44-year-old Sokela Tayang cast her vote around 1 pm. For the single voter, a team of polling officials trekked nearly 40 km on foot through treacherous terrain and set up a voting booth in the remote polling station. *—PTI*

ARUNACHAL PRADESH



Phases: **1**

2 Seats in phase 1

8.92 lakh Total voters

Specially-abled voters arrive to cast their votes during the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Agartala on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Women voters outnumber men in all 5 seats in Assam

GUWAHATI/NORTH LAKHIMPUR, 19 APRIL

Women, who outnumber male voters in all the five Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam going to polls in the first phase, came out in large numbers to exercise their franchise on Friday.

Women were seen queuing up before polling stations from 5 am and most of them said they wanted to cast their vote early so that they could return home and continue with their daily chores.

The total number of women voters in the five constituencies is 43,64,859 compared to 42,82,887 men, while there are 123 from the third gender.

There are, however, only four women candidates in the fray, constituting 11.4 per cent of the total 35 contestants.

In another incident amid polling, an SUV carrying an electronic voting machine (EVM) partially sank into a river after water level rose suddenly washing away a mechanised boat that was ferrying the vehicle in Lakhimpur constituency officials said.

The driver and the polling officer of the vehicle managed to get out before water gushed into the vehicle.

It was on its way to Amarpur area in Sadiya to replace an EVM after a technical glitch was detected in it as polling commenced in the morning, the official said.

—PTI

ASSAM

Phases: **3**

5 Seats in phase 1

86.47 lakh Total voters

Tripura: INDIA approaches EC over 'poll violence', 'manipulation'

AGARTALA, 19 APRIL

The INDIA alliance approached to Election Commission over 'poll violence', and 'manipulation' of voter mandate in Tripura during the first phase of polling in Lok Sabha elections. The alliance said that there is a clear manipulation of people's mandate.

In his complaints to the CEC, state Congress chief Ashish Kumar Saha alleged poll violations, intimidation and physical assaults on polling agents and voters at different locations in the state. He also wrote a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar. They also met and sought intervention from Returning Officer Vishal Kumar and Tripura Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Puneet Agarwal. He also said many voters, mostly Muslims and Opposition supporters, were threatened last evening and were asked not to reach the polling booths in Ramnagar Assembly constituency. They alleged that polling agents were denied entry or thrown out by force from 1,500 centres out of 1,686 centres in the West Tripura Parliamentary constituency. BJP state spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharjee said, "If there were genuine complaints, the INDIA bloc should have lodged specific complaints." *—Agencies*

TRIPURA

Phases: **2**

1 Seats in phase 1

14.61 lakh Total voters

BJP-Cong trade barbs in conflict-struck Manipur

A transgender voter poses after casting the vote in Manipur on Friday **PHOTO: X/@CeoManipur**

MANIPUR

Phases: **2**

2 Seats in phase 1

9.37 lakh Total voters

IMPHAL, 19 APRIL

Both BJP and Congress on Friday accused each other of unleashing violence and breaching the election Model Code of Conduct in Manipur during the polls.

BJP's state Unit General Secretary K Sarat Kumar said that Congress candidate of Manipur Inner LS seat Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, accompanied by large number of his supporters, visited several polling stations and provoked officials and voters leading to multiple commotions.

On the other hand, Congress has blamed BJP for violence during voting in Inner Manipur.

Kh Devbrata, Working President of the state unit of Congress said, "We strongly condemn the acts of armed unidentified men entering polling stations and intimidating voters and indulging in proxy voting."

Election in-charge of Manipur and Nagaland for AICC, Girish Chodankar, wrote on X that violence and booth capturing by armed miscreants have been witnessed in several places."Earlier during the day, incidents of intimidation and firing were reported from at least two places in Inner Manipur constituency where voting for the Lok Sabha polls was underway, officials said. At Thamnapokpi under Moirang constituency in Bishnupur district, armed men fired several rounds in the air near a polling booth prompting voters to flee, police said. *—PTI*

In a 1st, Andaman's Shompen tribe votes

PORT BLAIR, 19 APRIL

For the first time in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, seven members of the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTGs) of Great Nicobar Islands on Friday exercised their voting rights for lone Lok Sabha seat in the union territory, an official said.

Not only Shompen tribe members exercised their voting rights at polling station 411 named as 'Shompen Hut' built inside the forest staff quarters but also they posed for selfies at a designated cut-out made by the Election Commission of India, which reads – "I vote for sure".

Shompen tribes were assisted in their language by an interpreter known as 'Mathiyas'. Speaking to PTI, Chief Electoral Officer, BS Jaglan said, "This is for the first time a total of seven members of Shompen tribe exercised their voting rights. Earlier, we have given them training about EVMs and VVPATs through a trainer."

An election official said nearly 91 per cent of voting happened at Dugong Creek where Onge primate tribes live exclusively. *—PTI*

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Phases: **1**

Seats in phase 1:**1**

3.16 lakh Total voters

A voter from the Shompen tribal community poses for a photo **PHOTO: PTI**

Lakshadweep picks up pace after a slow start

KAVARATHI, 19 APRIL

A booth in Lakshadweep recorded a voter turnout of more than 90 per cent in the first six hours. Notably, the union territory has recorded an overall turnout of only 59.0 per cent till 5 pm.

Voting started at 7.30 am across 55 booths of the 10 islands of Lakshadweep today. Till 1:30, Bitra island recorded 92.83 per cent polling, Election Commission officials said.

A total of 57,784 people, including 29,278 men and 28,506 women, are eligible voters of this union territory. Around 300 polling officials and 500 security personnel have been engaged in the polling process.

Considering the geographical features of Lakshadweep, voting began at 7.30 am here while it other areas it was 7 am.

As per EC officials, till 1.30 pm, Bitra Island recorded the highest voter turnout of 92.83 per cent wherein 239 of the 264 total voters had cast their votes here. Next comes, Kiltan Island with a polling percentage of 35.34. Kadamat, registered 32.38 per cent polling and Chatlat 32.33 per cent. Around 32.18 per cent polling was recorded in Kavaratti and 31.18 per cent in Agathi. Those with less than 30 per cent polling rates are Antroth (29.47), Kalpeni (29.72), Minikoyi (23.82) and Amini Island (26.41). Polling in many of the islands started at a slow pace but picked up pace in the afternoon, officials said.*—Agencies*

LAKSHADWEEP

Phases: **1**

1 Seats in phase 1

57,000 Total voters

Peaceful polling in Sikkim

GANGTOK, 19 APRIL

An estimated 67.95 per cent of the 4.64 lakh voters exercised their franchise as polling for the 32-member assembly passed off peacefully in Sikkim on Friday, officials said.

In the lone Lok Sabha seat of the state, the turnout is slightly over 68 per cent. The voting percentage in lone Lok Sabha seat stood at 68.06 per cent as against 81.41 per cent in 2019. There are differences between turnouts of Lok Sabha and Assembly polls as a number of voters did not take part in both elections.

Though the polling ended at 5 pm, long queues of voters were seen at several polling booths at that time and they will be allowed to cast their votes as per the EC guidelines. No untoward incident was reported from anywhere in the state, officials said. As many as 13 companies of the central force, besides an adequate number of Sikkim police personnel were deployed to supervise the elections.

A total of 146 candidates, including Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, his predecessor Pawan Kumar Chamling, former India Football captain Bhaichung Bhutia, and Tamang's wife Krishna Kumari Rai are in the fray for 32 Assembly constituencies.

—PTI

SIKKIM

Phases: **1**

1 Seats in phase 1

4.6 lakh Total voters

U'khand voter loses cool; CM & kin vote in Khatima

DEHRADUN, 19 APRIL

An elderly voter in Haridwar threw an electronic voting machine (EVM) on the ground, demanding voting take place through ballot paper, police said. EVM was a bit damaged but it was not replaced as it continued to function, they said. Randhir, 70, was taken into custody after information was received about the incident.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was among the first batch of people to cast their votes. Along with his mother and wife, Dhami arrived at the Nagra Terai polling station in Khatima and stood in a queue to exercise his franchise.

Talking to reporters, the Chief Minister said there was great enthusiasm among people.

"Uttarakhand has seen unprecedented development in the last 10 years. All sections of the society have benefitted from it," he said. Dhami also spoke of the BJP's "Sankalp Patra" (manifesto), which talks about the need for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country, on the lines of the one passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly.

Former chief minister Harish Rawat said people have voted for change and claimed that the Congress is going to win all the five seats in Uttarakhand. *—PTI*

UTTARAKHAND

Phases: **1**

5 Seats in phase 1

83 lakh Total voters

SHAPING DEMOCRACY

Clockwise from left: Three newly-wedded couples arrive at a polling station to cast their votes in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand on Friday; An elderly voter from Kurung Kumey district in Arunachal Pradesh being helped to the polling booth; An elderly voter shows her finger marked with indelible ink after casting her vote in Sivasagar, Assam; Former Indian football player and Sikkim Democratic Front candidate Bhaichung Bhutia casts vote at a polling booth in Sikkim on Friday **PHOTOS: PTI/ X@ceoarunachal/ @Northeastlive**

20 MLAs refuse to cast vote in Nagaland

KOHIMA, 19 APRIL

Over 20 legislators from Eastern Nagaland refused to cast their vote on Friday in response to Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation's (ENPO) call to abstain from participating in the Lok Sabha. The call was given in support of their statehood demand.

Polling personnel in six eastern districts of Nagaland waited for nine hours in booths, but not one of

Asked if any action would be initiated against the 20 legislators of eastern Nagaland for not casting votes, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said, "We don't want confrontation. Let us see what will happen."

Hours before the Lok Sabha elections are due to begin in Nagaland, the ENPO imposed an indefinite total shutdown in the eastern part of the state from 6 pm on Thursday.

The organisation also cautioned that if any person goes to vote and any law and order situation arises, it will be the responsibility of the voter concerned.

Stating that eastern Nagaland is presently under a "public emergency", ENPO president Tsapikiu Sangtam claimed that the shutdown was a voluntary initiative taken by the people of the region.

Voting for the lone Nagaland Lok Sabha seat began on Friday morning amidst heavy security measures, election officials said. *—PTI*

NAGALAND

Phases: **1**

1 Seats in phase 1

4 lakh Total voters

Mizoram sees disruption

AIZAWL, 19 APRIL

Mizoram reportedly saw a peaceful day of voting even as some EVMs and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines malfunctioned. However, the issues were resolved and machines were replaced immediately.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old security personnel on election duty in Mizoram died due to cardiac arrest on Friday, officials said.

He died due to cardiac arrest around 4.45 am, the officials said. *—PTI*

MIZORAM

Phases: **1**

1 Seats in phase 1

8.6 lakh Total voters

Meghalaya sees massive voters for 2 seats

SHILLONG, 19 APRIL

Polling was being held at 3,512 polling stations in Meghalaya, in which 10 candidates are in the fray - six for the Shillong parliamentary seat and four for the Tura Lok Sabha seat.

An estimated 22.67 lakh voters exercised their franchise to seal the fate of the candidates. The National People's Party (NPP), which has been leading ruling alliance for the last six years, is being backed by BJP in both seats.

NPP is seeking to retain the Tura seat represented by Agatha K Sangma while the Opposition Congress' candidate and three-time sitting MP Vincent H Pala is seeking re-election for the fourth time.

TMC is set to give NPP a run for its money in Tura while Opposition Voice of the People's Party is seeking to unseat Pala in Shillong. Political parties in Meghalaya have all expressed confidence of winning the seats their candidates have contested from as almost every party pointed to the robust voter turnout of about 70 per cent to claim their victory. *—PTI*

MEGHALAYA

Phases: **1**

2 Seats in phase 1

22 lakh Total voters

Cal HC asks lawyers to ditch gown amid heatwave

KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

As the summer heat refuses to abate with day temperatures in the city hovering around 40 degrees Celsius, wearing of advocates' gown by lawyers has been exempted at the Calcutta High Court by a direction of Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam. The Met department has forecast that heatwave or hot and discomforting weather conditions in Kolkata and its surrounding districts will continue for at least the next five days. A High Court notification said that upon consideration of the ongoing inclement weather combined with heatwave, the Chief Justice has directed an exemption on wearing of advocates' gown till the end of the summer vacation to give relief to the lawyers. *—PTI*

Poll officials walk 18 kms to help Kerala man vote

IDUKKI, 19 APRIL

It was an 18-km trek through the dense forest filled with wild animals for a team of nine polling officials, comprising three women, on Wednesday to record the vote of a bedridden citizen at Edamalakkudy in Kerala's high-range district of Idukki for the Lok Sabha polls. In the tribal village of Edamalakkudy, nestled deep within this hill district's lush forests, lives 92-year-old Sivalingam. Despite his age and being bedridden, Sivalingam's determination to vote remains strong.Officials said tears welled up in the eyes of the nonagenarian after casting his vote.They said a team of nine polling officials, including three women, undertook a challenging journey to reach Sivalingam's home on Wednesday. *—PTI*

Tipra Motha Chief gets notice for violating MCC

AGARTALA, 19 APRIL

Tripura Chief Electoral Officer on Friday served a notice to Tipra Motha Chief Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma for violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by making a statement during 'silence period' through a social media post. On Thursday, Debbarma made an appeal through live Facebook to a particular community to vote for a particular party. "In the light of the provisions of the MCC and relevant electoral laws, the matter is prima facie found to violate the electoral laws. It is clear from your said message that your appeal is to a particular community to vote in favour of a particular party", he said. *—PTI*

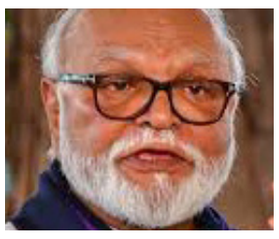


PHOTO: PTI

Withdrawing from race for Nashik LS ticket: Bhujbal

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Senior NCP leader and Maharashtra Minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Friday said he has decided not to seek ticket from the Nashik Lok Sabha constituency so as to end the deadlock over the seat also coveted by the ally Shiv Sena. Speaking at a press conference here, Bhujbal said during the seat-sharing talks with the ruling allies Shiv Sena and BJP, NCP Chief and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar staked claim to the Nashik seat, saying that his party had more MLAs in the region. "When we were asked about the candidate, the name of former MP (Chhagan Bhujbal's nephew) Sameer Bhujbal was proposed. But (BJP leader) Amit Shah said I should contest even though I had not asked for a ticket," he said. Shinde, however, demanded the seat as the incumbent MP is from his party, Bhujbal added. *—PTI*

Adultery can be ground for divorce, not for custody: HC

Court grants a child's custody to mother despite adultery

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Adultery can be a ground for divorce but not for granting custody of a child, Bombay High Court said while granting custody of a nine-year-old girl to her mother.

A single bench of Justice Rajesh Patil on 12 April dismissed the petition filed by the man, son of a former legislator, challenging an order passed by the family court in February 2023 granting custody of his daughter to his estranged wife.

The couple tied the knot in 2010, and their daughter was born in 2015. In 2019, the woman claimed that she was removed from their home. The petitioner, however, alleged that his wife had left of her own volition.

The petitioner's counsel, Indira Jaising, submitted to court that the woman had multiple affairs, and hence, it would not be proper to hand over the custody of the child to her.

The man alleged that his wife had multiple affairs PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Justice Patil noted that the allegations of adulterous behaviour would have no bearing or doubt while deciding the matter of the child's custody.

The man, in his plea, claimed that it was in the child's best interest to live with him and his parents, as she was not happy with her mother and there were some behavioural changes in her. Jaising said the court that the authorities at the girl's school had written emails to the petitioner's mother, raising concerns about her behaviour.

The court , however, refused to accept this and questioned why the school got in touch with the paternal grandmother when the parents were well-educated. It noted that the petitioner's mother was a former legislator aspiring to contest the Lok Sabha elections. Justice Patil noted that the girl was only nine, which is a pre-puberty age, and in such custody matters, the court must consider the welfare of the child as paramount.

The girl was taken care of by her maternal grandmother, and her academic record during her custody with the mother was also good, he said.

"Therefore, according to me, there is no reason to change the custody from the wife to the husband," the court said.

The bench directed the petitioner to hand over his daughter's custody to the wife by 12 April. In February 2023, the family court handed over custody of the girl to the mother and allowed access to the father. *—PTI*

Rly operates record number of additional trains for summer

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

To ensure the convenience of passengers and manage the anticipated surge in travel demand during summers, Indian Railways is operating a record-breaking 9,111 trips during summer season.

This marks a substantial rise compared to the summer of 2023, where a total of 6,369 trips were offered.

The additional trains have been planned to connect key destinations across the country, ensuring seamless travel on major railway routes.

All zonal railways spread across India have geared up to operate these additional trips, catering to the summer travel rush from states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

Planning and running of additional trains is a continuous process for which inputs are taken from all the communication channels 24x 7 like media reports, social media platforms, Railway Integrated helpline number 139, apart from details of waitlist passengers in PRS system, to assess demand of trains on a particular route. Based on this requirement, number of trains and number of trips are augmented. Neither the number of trains nor the number of trips run by additional train(s) is static for the entire season.

During the summer season, Zonal Railways have been instructed to ensure availability of drinking water at Railway stations. Elaborate crowd control arrangements are made at all major and important railway stations.

Passengers can book their ticket in these additional trains through Railway Ticket counters or IRCTC website/ app. *—ANI*

Fossils of 'largest' snake found in Guj

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Fossils recovered from Kutch in Gujarat may have belonged to the spine of one of the largest snakes to have ever lived, according to new research from the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee.

From the Panandhro Lignite Mine, researchers discovered 27 "mostly well-preserved" bones forming the snake's spinal column, or vertebra, with some connections still intact. They said the vertebrae appeared to be from a fully-grown animal.

PHOTO: IIT ROORKEE

The snake is estimated to be between roughly 11 and 15 metres long, comparable in size only to the extinct Titanoboa, known to be the longest snake to have ever lived, the researchers said. Owing to its size, it may have been a "slow-moving ambush predator," similar to an anaconda, they said. The findings are published in the journal Scientific Reports.

The researchers have named this newly discovered snake species 'Vasuki Indicus' (V. Indicus) after the mythical snake round the neck of the Hindu deity Shiva . The authors dated the fossils to the Middle Eocene period, roughly 47 million years ago. *—PTI*

DINESH KUMAR TRIPATHI NAMED NEW NAVY CHIEF

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi will be the new Navy Chief by the end of this month succeeding incumbent Admiral R Hari Kumar.

Kumar will retire from service on 30 April.

Tripathi is currently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.

Bom on 15 May, 1964 Tripathi was commissioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy on 1 July, 1985.

A communication and electronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 30 years.

Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

Vice Admiral Tripathi has served in a variety of command, staff and instructional appointments.

He has commanded INS Vinash.

He has also held various important operational and staff appointments which include Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet, Director of Naval Operations, Principal Director Network Centric Operations and Principal Director of Naval Plans at New Delhi. *—PTI*

REMARKS ON ALLOPATHY

SC adjourns Baba Ramdev's plea on clubbing of FIRs

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Ramdev PHOTO:PTI

Supreme Court on Friday adjourned for July the hearing of a plea filed by Yoga guru Baba Ramdev to club FIRs lodged against him in different States over his alleged remarks that allopathy cannot cure Covid-19.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and SVN Bhatti granted two weeks' time to the states of Bihar and Chhattisgarh to inform it about the status regarding the FIRs and the chargesheet filed.

It also asked Ramdev's counsel to implead the complainants in the case before the top court and posted the matter in July.

Ramdev approached the top court seeking protection in criminal FIRs lodged against him in various states over his alleged remarks on efficacy of allopathy in treatment of Covid-19 pandemic.

Ramdev's plea sought clubbing of FIRs and transfer of cases to Delhi lodged against him.

The plea of Ramdev also sought a stay on the proceedings in multiple cases lodged against him and had also sought protection from coercive actions in FIRs lodged by Indian Medical Associations (IMA) Patna and Raipur branches and transfer the FIRs to Delhi.

In a video, Ramdev in 2021 was allegedly heard saying, "Allopathy is a stupid science and medicines such as Remdesivir, Fabiflu, and other drugs approved by the Drugs Controller General of India have failed to treat Covid-19 patients." Police in Chhattisgarh's Raipur had registered an FIR based on a complaint filed by the Raipur's IMA unit against Ramdev for allegedly spreading "false" information about the medicines being used by the medical fraternity for the treatment of Covid-19. *—ANI*

Submerged vehicles on a major road in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Wednesday after heavy rains PHOTO: PTI

Reschedule unnecessary travels to UAE: India

ABU DHABI, 19 APRIL

Indian embassy in UAE on Friday advised the inbound Indian passengers travelling to or transiting through Dubai International Airport to reschedule non-essential travel till operations normalise after the city witnessed unprecedented rains this week.

The embassy in the advisory said while the UAE authorities were working round the clock to ensure normalisation of operations, the airport authorities have advised that passengers may travel to the airport "only after" final confirmation from the respective airlines regarding the departure date and time of flights.

Due to disruption caused by unprecedented weather conditions in the UAE earlier this week, Dubai International Airport has temporarily limited the number of inbound flights, the advisory said.

Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel hoped to be back on a normal schedule within 24 hours. *—PTI*

'Aatank' supplier Pak now wants 'atta': Modi

DAMOH, 19 APRIL

Taking a dig at Pakistan without naming it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said a country which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terror) is struggling for 'aata' (flour) these days.

Addressing an election rally at Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, he said India, which once bought most of its arms from overseas, was now exporting high-tech weapons to other countries, and referred to providing BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to Philippines.

> **There are many countries in the world whose condition has worsened. Many are getting bankrupt. Even one of our neighbours, which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terrorism), is now struggling for supply of 'aata' (flour)**
>
> - Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

"There are many countries in the world whose condition has worsened. Many are getting bankrupt. Even one of our neighbours, which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terrorism), is now struggling for supply of 'aata' (flour)," Modi said, targeting Pakistan.

Narendra Modi PHOTO: PTI

He asserted his government works with the principle of "Rashtra Pratham" (nation first) and never succumbs to pressure from any quarter or bows before anyone.

He also accused Congress of weakening the defence sector for decades when in power and alleged the opposition party did not want French made Rafale fighter jets to come to India.

He highlighted that the ongoing Lok Sabha election is about making India a big global power in the next five years and asserted a strong and stable government was needed in view of prevailing situation in the world.

Meanwhile, addressing a poll rally in Amroha, he accused previous governments of cheating the SC, ST and OBC communities in the name of social justice.

He also took a veiled dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav, saying the "do shehzade ki jodi" has been rejected by people.

"Every time these people go out to seek votes from the people of Uttar Pradesh, they carry a basket of dynasty, corruption and appeasement. They do not leave any chance to attack our faith." he said. *—PTI*

Supriya Sule PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

SUPRIYA OWES RS 35 LAKH TO RIVAL SUNETRA

PUNE, 19 APRIL

The electoral battle in Maharashtra's Baramati Lok Sabha seat is going to be a closely watched contest between NCP candidates Sunetra Pawar and Supriya Sule, who are vying for victory in the Pawar family's stronghold.

The affidavits disclose that Pawar has loaned Rs 35 lakh to Sule and Rs 50 lakh to Pratibha Pawar, wife of Sharad Pawar. Sule has also borrowed Rs 20 lakh from Parth Pawar, son of Sunetra and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. Interestingly, the Sule family does not own any vehicles.

Sunetra's affidavit shows that her family owns property worth around Rs 121.45 crore, with investments in shares and mutual funds as well. She owns jewellery worth Rs 34.39 lakh, while her husband, Ajit, has assets worth Rs 37.15 crore in various banks.

On the other hand, Sule and her husband own property worth more than Rs 150 crore, with investments only in India. Sule has borrowed Rs 20 lakh from Parth and Rs 35 lakh from Sunetra.

The couple also possesses jewellery worth around Rs 5.45 crore, including gold, silver, and diamonds. *—ANI*

BJP's Chhindwara Mayor backs Congress

CHHINDWARA, 19 APRIL

On the day of polling in the high-profile Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat in Madhya Pradesh on Friday, the city's mayor Vikram Ahake, who recently joined BJP, urged people to vote for Congress' Nakul Nath.

"Soon after joining a political party, I was feeling suffocated. I felt that I was not doing the right thing with a person who has developed Chhindwara," Ahake said in a video message shared on social media.Nath always devoted himself to the constituency's betterment, be it the education sector, providing treatment to people or carrying out development works, said Ahake.

"In the future, I will get a lot of opportunities to do politics. I don't know what will happen to me, but if I don't stand with my leader Kamal Nath and Nakul Nath today... as they have done a lot for me... I appeal to the voters to ensure the victory of Nakul Nath (and his father Kamal Nath) with a huge margin," Ahake said in the video message.

BJP has fielded Vivek Bunty Sahu against Nakul and many senior party leaders visited the constituency to campaign for him. Chhindwara is among the six Lok Sabha seats where polling is underway in the first phase of the parliamentary elections.

The Chhindwara mayor had joined BJP on 1 April in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and the state party president Vishnu Dutt Sharma in the state capital.Of the 29 Lok Sabha seats in MP, Chhindwara is the only constituency that BJP had lost in 2019.Former MP chief minster Kamal Nath had won from this seat nine times. *—PTI*

Mango bites: Kejri slams 'petty' ED for 'politicising' his food

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Accusing Enforcement Directorate of being "petty" and "politicising" what he ate in jail, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday asserted before a court that the food he consumed was in conformity with the diet chart prepared by his doctor.

ED had on Thursday claimed before the court that Kejriwal was eating food high in sugar like mangoes and sweets every day, despite having type 2 diabetes, to create grounds for medical bail.

Kejriwal's counsel launched a spirited assault on the federal anti-money agency over its claim that the AAP national convenor was eating food laden with sugar so he can fall ill and seek bail on medical grounds.

Referring to ED's claim about the politician eating mangoes, sweets, aalo-poori etc regularly, he said these were provided to him only a few times.

Arvind Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

- Kejriwal's counsel launched an assault on the federal anti-money agency over its claim the AAP national convenor was eating food laden with sugar so he can fall ill and seek bail on medical grounds

Kejriwal, who had on Thursday withdrawn a petition for consulting his doctor thrice a week about his fluctuating sugar levels, moved a fresh plea on Friday seeking consultations with his physician for 15 minutes every day.

ED opposed Singhvi's submissions, claiming the food Kejriwal was eating did not match the diet chart prescribed by his doctor. It said Tihar jail had sufficient medical facilities to take care of Kejriwal's diabetes.

ED's contentions were opposed by senior advocate Ramesh Gupta, who also appeared for Kejriwal.

"What has ED got to do with this hearing? He (ED) is not a party. It is between me and jail and court? They are having a media trial and press is publishing anything it wants," the counsel told the court. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AP

Toll in attack on govt officials in Pakistan rises to 7

PESHAWAR, 19 APRIL

With the death of two more persons, the toll in Thursday's ambush on a government vehicle in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province rose to seven, police said on Friday. The deceased include five officials and two passer-byes, including a four-year-old girl and a man. The officials from Customs Intelligence were on routine duty on Quetta Road in Dera Ismail Khan district in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province when unknown gunmen opened fire at their vehicle, police said. On Thursday, police said five people, including a girl child, were killed in the attack. The killers fled from the scene before police from Draban Police Station rushed to the area. *—PTI*

Emirates halts flight as UAE recovers from record rains

DUBAI, 19 APRIL

Long-haul carrier Emirates said on Friday it would again halt local check-in for passengers travelling on its flights as the wider United Arab Emirates tries to recover from record-setting rains this week.

Emirates said the order would go through the entire day into early Saturday. "This is to support operations recovery from the recent bad weather at our Dubai hub," the airline said on X. Low-cost carrier FlyDubai also saw some disruptions. Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, hoped to be back on a normal schedule within 24 hours, its CEO told The Associated Press late Thursday. The UAE, a hereditarily ruled, autocratic nation on the Arabian Peninsula, typically sees little rainfall in its arid desert climate. *—AP*

Scotland: 2 Indian students die at scenic waterfall

LONDON, 19 APRIL

Two students from India who were studying at a university in the UK have been killed in a tragic drowning incident at a scenic waterfall in Scotland. Police Scotland are yet to name the men from Andhra Pradesh in their 20s and a post-mortem is due to take place on Friday. The incident took place at the Linn of Tummel near Blair of Atholl in Perthshire on Wednesday night when two men from a group of friends on an outing fell into the water and got into difficulty. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service sent boat teams and vessels to assist with the rescue efforts after their friends raised the alarm with the emergency services.

"Around 7 pm on Wednesday, April 17, we received a report of two men, aged 22 and 26 years, in the water at the Linn of Tummel waterfall near Blair Atholl," said a Police. *—PTI*

Ex-Maldivian prez freed after court overturns conviction

MALE, 19 APRIL

A court in the Maldives on Thursday threw out former President Abdulla Yameen's 11-year prison sentence on money laundering and bribery charges and ordered a retrial. The development comes two days ahead of parliamentary elections in this Indian Ocean archipelago nation, known as an exclusive tourist destination. The ruling, which was broadcast on the court's YouTube channel, is seen as a potential boost to President Mohamed Muizzu's party, which is seeking to secure a majority in the 87-member Parliament. Yameen and Muizzu have long been political allies. The High Court ruled on Yameen's appeal and said in its decision that his 2022 trial before the Criminal Court was unfair and released him. *—AP*

Iran fires air batteries at air base, nuclear site

The Iranian authority said that they have spotted drones

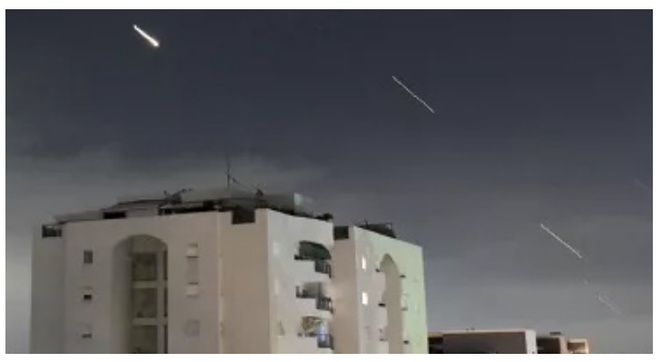
DUBAI, 19 APRIL

Iran fired air defences at a major air base and a nuclear site near the central city of Isfahan after spotting drones early Friday morning, raising fears of a possible Israeli strike in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented drone-and-missile assault on the country.

It was unclear if the country came under attack, as no Iranian official directly acknowledged the possibility and Israel's military did not respond to a request for comment.

However, tensions have been high since the Saturday assault on Israel amid its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its own strikes targeting Iran in Syria.

US officials declined to comment as of early Friday, but American broadcast networks quoting unnamed US officials said Israel carried out the attack. The New York Times quoted anonymous Israeli officials claiming the assault. Air defence batteries fired in several provinces over reports of drones being in the air, state television reported.



Tensions have been high since the Saturday assault on Israel amid its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its own strikes targeting Iran in Syria *PHOTO: PTI*

In particular, IRNA said air defences fired at a major air base in Isfahan, which long has been home to Iran's fleet of American-made F-14 Tomcats — purchased before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Tasnim later published a video from one of its reporters, who said he was in the southeastern Zerdenjan area of Isfahan, near its "nuclear energy mountain".

The footage showed two different anti-aircraft gun positions, and details of the video corresponded with known features of the site of Iran's Uranium Conversion Facility at Isfahan. "At 4:45, we heard gunshots. There was nothing going on," he said. "It was the air defence, these guys that you're watching, and over there too."

The facility at Isfahan operates three small Chinese-supplied research reactors, as well as handling fuel production and other activities for Iran's civilian nuclear programme. Isfahan also is home to sites associated with Iran's nuclear program, including its underground Natanz enrichment site, which has been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks.

Dubai-based carriers Emirates and FlyDubai began diverting around western Iran about 4:30 am local time. They offered no explanation, though local warnings to aviators suggested the airspace may have been closed.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre warned ships in the region that they could see increased drone activity in the skies. "There are currently no indications commercial vessels are the intended target," it wrote. The Houthis have launched at least 53 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. *—PTI*

US vetoes Palestinian bid to gain statehood

UNITED NATIONS, 19 APRIL

The US has vetoed a resolution in the UN Security Council on the latest Palestinian bid to be granted full membership of the United Nations, an outcome lauded by Israel but criticised by Palestine as "unfair, immoral, and unjustified".

The 15-nation Council voted on a draft resolution Thursday that would have recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly "that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the United Nations." The resolution got 12 votes in its favour, with Switzerland and the UK abstaining and the US casting its veto. To be adopted, the draft resolution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Palestinian attempts for recognition as a full member state began in 2011. Palestine is currently a non-member observer state, a status that was granted in November 2012 by the UN General Assembly.

- The draft resolution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the UK and the United States

This status allows Palestine to participate in proceedings of the world body but it cannot vote on resolutions. The only other non-member Observer State at the UN is the Holy See, representing the Vatican. Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised the US for vetoing what he called a "shameful proposal."

US Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs, said in the explanation of the vote at the Security Council meeting on Palestinian membership that Washington continues to strongly support a two-state solution. Wood said there are "unresolved questions" as to whether Palestine meets the criteria to be considered a State. *—PTI*

The station in the main city Dnipro came under attack, and several homes were hit east in Synelnykove *PHOTO: DSNS Ukraine Emergency Service*

Children among 9 dead in Ukraine

KYIV, 19 APRIL

Two Russian strikes in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region have killed nine people, including three children, officials say.

The station in the main city Dnipro came under attack, and several homes were hit further east in Synelnykove. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack highlighted the need for every city to have adequate air defences.

In a separate strike, Ukraine said that for the first time it had downed a long-range bomber in Russian territory. According to Ukraine's interior ministry, two children aged six and eight were among six people killed when private homes were targeted by Russian strikes on the town of Synelnykove. A third child died later in hospital and several other people were reported wounded.

In the regional capital Dnipro another two people were killed and 20 were wounded when a five-storey building was hit. Rescue services were continuing to search the rubble and warned that the number of victims would rise, the ministry added. A maternity hospital also came under fire.

Ukraine's air force also claimed on Friday it shot down a Russian strategic bomber, but Moscow officials said the plane crashed in a sparsely populated area due to a malfunction after a combat mission.

Neither claim could be independently verified. Previous Ukrainian claims of shooting down Russian warplanes during their more than two-year war have met with silence or denials from Moscow.

Russia's air force is vastly more powerful than Ukraine's, but sophisticated missile systems provided by Kyiv's Western partners are a major threat to Russian aviation as the Kremlin's forces slowly push forward along the around 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line in what has become a grinding war of attrition.

BBC News/*—AP*

22 killed in IS attacks in Syrian desert

BEIRUT, 19 APRIL

An attack on pro-government fighters by suspected members of the Islamic State group in central Syria killed 22 pro-government fighters, an opposition war monitor and pro-government media reported on Friday.

Gunmen attacked a bus carrying members of the Quds Brigade, a government and Russian-backed faction of mostly Palestinian fighters in Syria, near the town of Sukhna late Thursday night. Sukhna was once an IS stronghold.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based Opposition war monitor, and the pro-government radio station Sham FM said IS was behind the attack.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights *PHOTO: NORTH PRESS*

Both the Observatory and Sham Foreign Minister said 22 fighters were killed. Sham FM said they were all Quds Brigade gunmen, while the Observatory said the majority belonged to the group. The Quds Brigade fought on the side of Syrian government forces during the country's 13-year conflict, which has killed half a million people and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

The Quds Brigade is different from the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, which uses the same name. Despite their defeat in Syria in March 2019, IS sleeper cells have been blamed for deadly attacks against both Syrian government forces and against members of the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. *—AP*

Poland: 2 arrested over attack on Navalny ally

VILNIUS, 19 APRIL

Two people have been detained in Poland on suspicion of attacking Russian opposition activist Leonid Volkov, an ally of the late activist Alexei Navalny, the Lithuanian president announced on Friday.

Volkov was attacked in March outside his home in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, where he lives in exile. The attacker smashed one of his car's windows, sprayed tear gas into his eyes and hit him with a hammer, police said at the time. President Gitanas Nauseda announced the arrests to reporters in Vilnius and thanked Poland for its work, though there was no immediately comment from Polish officials. "Two people have been detained on suspicion of beating Russian opposition leader Leonid Volkov," Nauseda said. *—AP*

Trump criminal case: 12-person jury seated in Manhattan

NEW YORK, 19 APRIL

A jury of 12 people was seated Thursday in former President Donald Trump's hush money trial in New York, and the court quickly turned to selecting alternate jurors.

The rapid progress Thursday afternoon propelled the case closer to opening statements and weeks of testimony in a case charging the Republican ex-president with falsifying business records to suppress stories about his sex life in the final days of the 2016 election.

The jury includes sales professional, a software engineer, an English teacher and multiple lawyers. The case centres on $1,30,000 Trump's lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen paid to porn actor Stormy Daniels. Trump faces 34 felony counts. He denies any wrongdoing.

Earlier in the day, two other jurors were dismissed, one after expressing doubt about her ability to be fair following disclosure of details about her identity. Another juror was let go over concerns that some of his answers in court may have been inaccurate.

Donald Trump *PHOTO: PTI*

- Another juror was let go over concerns that some of his answers in court may have been inaccurate

The jury selection process picked up momentum Tuesday with the selection of seven jurors. But on Thursday, Judge Juan Merchan revealed in court that one of the seven, a cancer nurse, had "conveyed that after sleeping on it overnight she had concerns about her ability to be fair and impartial in this case."

And though jurors' names are being kept confidential, the woman told the judge and the lawyers that she had doubts after she said aspects of her identity had been made public.

The hush money case is one of four criminal prosecutions involving Trump as he vies to reclaim the White House, but it's possible that it will be the sole case to reach trial before November's presidential election. *—PTI*

INFECTED BLOOD SCANDAL

Children used as 'guinea pigs' in trials

LONDON, 19 APRIL

The true scale of the number of medical trials using infected blood products on children in the 1970s and 80s has been revealed by documents seen by BBC News.

They reveal a secret world of unsafe clinical testing involving children in the UK, as doctors placed research goals ahead of patients' needs.

They continued for more than 15 years, involved hundreds of people, and infected most with hepatitis C and HIV. One surviving patient told BBC he was treated like a "guinea pig". The trials involved children with blood clotting disorders, when families had often not consented to them taking part. The majority of the children who enrolled are now dead.

Documents also show that doctors in haemophilia centres across the country used blood products, even though they were widely known as likely to be contaminated.

A shortage of blood products in the UK in the 1970s and 80s meant they were imported from the US. High-risk donors such as prisoners and drug addicts provided the plasma for the treatments that were infected with potentially fatal viruses including hepatitis C - which attacks the liver resulting in cirrhosis and cancer - and HIV.

Luke O'Shea-Phillips, here aged 2, says he could have been killed by infected blood given to him during a clinical trial *PHOTO: Allan Archive*

One blood product, known as Factor VIII, was seen to be highly effective for stopping bleeding but also widely known to be contaminated with viruses.

'Guinea pig'

Luke O'Shea-Phillips, 42, has mild haemophilia - a blood clotting disorder that means he bruises and bleeds more easily than most.

He caught the potentially lethal viral infection hepatitis C while being treated at the Middlesex Hospital, in central London, which was administered because of a small cut to his mouth, aged three, in 1985. Documents seen by BBC suggest he was deliberately given the blood product - which his doctor knew might have been infected - so he could be enrolled in a clinical trial.

The doctor wanted to find out how likely patients were to catch diseases from a new version of heat-treated Factor VIII. Though he had never been treated for his condition before, Luke was given heat-treated Factor VIII to stop his mouth bleeding.

'Laboratory rats'

However, evidence of the clinical trials have raised wider concerns.

"A patient should always be given the best possible treatment and they should always have given informed consent - if those two factors haven't been achieved then a trial would be seen as very problematic," says Professor Emma Cave, Professor of Healthcare Law at Durham University.

BBC's investigation has revealed that Dr Machin and Dr Kernoff were among a community of doctors with similar research ambitions.

A specialist school near Alton, in Hampshire, was attended by a large cohort of haemophiliac boys. The school for disabled children had an NHS haemophilia unit on site, so boys who had bleeds could be treated quickly and then return to lessons. *—BBC News*

Hot molten lava glows at the crater of Mount Ruang as it erupts in Sanguine Islands, Indonesia, Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Indonesians leave homes near volcano due to ash

MANADO, 19 APRIL

Indonesian authorities closed an airport and residents left homes near an erupting volcano Thursday due to the dangers of spreading ash, falling rocks, hot volcanic clouds and the possibility of a tsunami.

Mount Ruang on the northern side of Sulawesi Island had at least five large eruptions Wednesday, causing the Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation to issue its highest-level alert, indicating an active eruption.

The crater emitted white-gray smoke continuously during the day Thursday, reaching more than 500 metres (1,600 feet) above the peak.

People have been ordered to stay at least 6 kilometres (3.7 miles) from the 725-metre (2,378 foot) mountain. More than 11,000 people live in the affected area and were told to leave. At least 800 have done so.

An international airport in Manado city was temporarily closed Thursday as volcanic ash was spewed into the air.

"We have to close flight operations at Sam Ratulangi Airport due to the spread of volcanic ash, which could endanger flight safety," said Ambar Suryoko, head of the regional airport authority. *—AP*

Rupee falls 6 paise to 83.58 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

The rupee depreciated 6 paise to 83.58 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, weighed down by a negative trend in domestic equities and elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said the strength of the American currency in the overseas market also dented investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.58 against the dollar, registering a fall of 6 paise over its previous close. The local unit pared the initial losses and also touched a high of 83.46 against the American currency in early trade on Friday. On Thursday, the rupee rebounded from its all-time low level and closed 9 paise higher at 83.52 against the US dollar Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 106.17, higher by 0.02 per cent. *—PTI*

Gold jumps Rs 400 to Rs 74K mark, silver hits fresh peak

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Gold and silver prices soared to fresh record high levels on Friday with the precious metal breaching Rs 74,000 per 10 grams mark here on bullish global trends According to HDFC Securities, gold price jumped Rs 400 to hit its lifetime high of Rs 74,100 per 10 grams in Delhi. It had closed at Rs 73,700 per 10 grams on Thursday. Similarly, silver prices rose by Rs 100 to hit a new peak of Rs 86,600 per kg. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,390 per ounce, up by USD 15 from the previous close. Gold in the global market surged near a record high in the Asian trading hours on Friday, following reports that Israel had struck targets on Iranian soil, days after Iran had launched an attack on Israel in retaliation for a raid on its consulate in Syria. *—PTI*

Intel announces Santosh as India region head

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Computer chip maker Intel on Friday announced Santosh Viswanathan will head the India region business as its Managing Director (MD). Viswanathan has been with Intel for about 21 years. Viswanathan took charge as Vice President and Managing Director for the Indian market in July 2022. Now Intel has carved out India as a separate region. The company also announced the appointment of Hans Chuang as General Manager (GM) of SMG Asia Pacific and Japan (APJ). Based out of Taiwan, Hans will be responsible for Intel's overall business in the APJ region, including driving revenue growth, engaging with the local ecosystem to create new opportunities, and strengthening existing customer and partner relationships, Intel said. *—PTI*

HDFC celebrates 24 years of fostering wealth creation

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

HDFC securities have announced the successful completion of 24 years in fostering wealth creation. Launched as a joint venture between HDFC Bank Limited, HDFC Limited and Indocean eSecurities Holdings Limited in 2000 the company has transformed into a leading investment services provider. From a humble beginning, the company is currently serving over 5 million customers, with a common goal of wealth creation. HDFC securities have been an integral part of India's growth story and have been the torchbearer of financial trust and reliability. The next 24 years of the company will coincide with the government of India's 'Vision 2047' – 'Viksit Bharat' - an aim to become a $30 trillion economy and foster inclusive economic participation among all citizens. HDFC securities will continue to play its part to foster financialisation of investment at a click of a button. The company has a crystal-clear vision to become the dominant brand in India, guiding consumers towards responsible investments. *—PTI*

Stock markets stage strong rebound after 4 days of slump

Nestle, HCL Technologies, Tata, Infosys were among laggards

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Stock markets rebounded from early lows to close higher on Friday, snapping the four-day losing streak on heavy value buying in banking and auto shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked further 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade. However, the index rebounded in the second half on value-buying in banking shares.

The NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 22,147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777.65 in early trade before paring its losses to end in the green.

From the Sensex basket, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Maruti, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank and ITC were the major gainers.

Nestle India, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Infosys were among the laggards.

Infosys declined nearly 1 per cent after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations.

NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points to close at 22.147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777 in early trade before its losses to end in the green *PHOTO: ANI*

- The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked further 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory.

European markets were trading in the red. Wall Street ended mostly lower on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.55 per cent to USD 87.62 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,260.33 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark tanked 454.69 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,488.99 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty declined 152.05 points or 0.69 per cent to 21,995.85. *—PTI*

CERELAC IN SOUP

Nestle shares down for 2nd day after sugar content row

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

- The stock declined 3.53 per cent to Rs 2,375.75 on the BSE. At the NSE, it dipped 2 per cent to Rs 2,412.05 apiece

Shares of Nestle India continued to trade lower on Friday, declining over 3.50 per cent, amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries. The stock declined 3.53 per cent to Rs 2,375.75 on the BSE. At the NSE, it dipped 2 per cent to Rs 2,412.05 apiece.

On Thursday, the shares of Nestle India had declined over 3 per cent.

Nestle India on Thursday said it has reduced added sugar on baby food products in India by over 30 per cent, depending on variants, over the past five years, amid reports that the global FMCG major sold products with more sugar content in less developed countries.

According to findings by Swiss NGO, Public Eye and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Nestle sold baby products with higher sugar content in less developed South Asian countries including India, Africa and Latin American nations as compared to markets in Europe.

When reached out for comments, a company spokesperson said, "Reduction of added sugars is a priority for Nestle India. Over the past 5 years, we have already reduced added sugars by up to 30 per cent, depending on the variant."

The spokesperson further said, "We regularly review our portfolio and continue to innovate and reformulate our products to further reduce the level of added sugars, without compromising on nutrition, quality, safety, and taste."

Nestle India asserted that its "infant cereal products are manufactured to ensure the appropriate delivery of nutritional requirements such as protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, iron etc. for early childhood". *—PTI*

'Blue collar jobs to drive 70 pc of growth by 2030'

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

PHOTO: ANI

Blue-collar workers, comprising over 80 per cent of India's non-agricultural workforce, play a pivotal role in driving and sustaining the country's economy across diverse sectors.

McKinsey & Company forecasts that by 2030, 70 per cent of the 90 million new jobs anticipated in India will fall under the category of blue-collar roles.

These positions constitute approximately 80 per cent of both organized and unorganized sector jobs in India, serving as the primary engine of the economy.

The fulfilment of these roles holds significant importance for the growth trajectories of sectors like manufacturing and logistics.

As of 2024, the hiring intent for non-white collar positions has experienced a 10 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

E-commerce is anticipated to witness the highest salary growth in 2024, projected at 10.9 per cent, followed by financial services with an expected growth rate of 10.1 per cent

Based on data from 2023, blue and grey-collar occupations contribute 1.25 per cent to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

With their indispensable contributions to industries such as infrastructure, construction, transportation, and manufacturing, these workers form the bedrock of economic growth.

Government initiatives and innovative solutions from start-ups signify steps towards ensuring the inclusion and well-being of this crucial segment, essential for India's journey towards economic prosperity. *—ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

WORLD BANK SETS GOAL TO EXPAND HEALTHCARE TO 1.5 BILLION BY 2030

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

World Bank Group has announced an ambitious plan to support countries in delivering quality, affordable health services to 1.5 billion people by 2030.

The strategy to reach 1.5 billion people is focused on three core elements: Expanding focus from maternal and child health to include coverage throughout a person's lifetime, including non-communicable diseases.

The other two are expanding operations to hard-to-reach areas, including remote villages, cities, and countries; and working with governments to cut unnecessary fees and other financial barriers to health care.

Intertwined challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, conflicts, societal aging, and a projected shortfall of 10 million health-care workers by 2030, exacerbate the cycle of poverty and inequality.

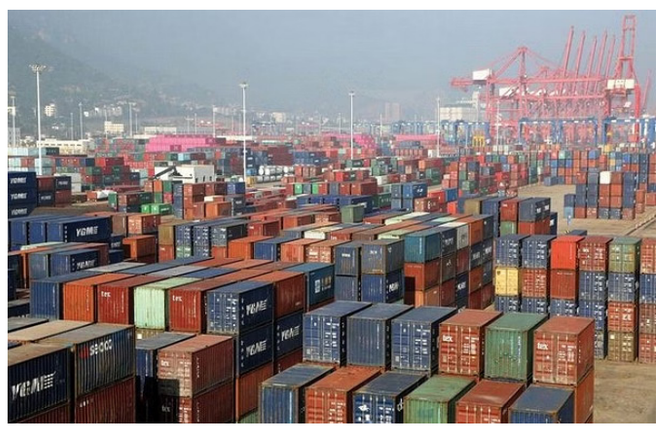
World Bank Group said it will combine financing, knowledge, and partnerships to address this challenge.

The goal to deliver quality, affordable health services to 1.5 billion people by 2030 is one of the more recent examples of World Bank Group's commitment to become more impact-oriented. *—PTI*

AMONG TOP 10 LIST

India's exports to China, UAE, Russia, Singapore rose in 2023-24

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL



India's financial year have risen through with a low base *PHOTO: ANI*

China, Russia, Iraq, UAE, Singapore are among countries where India's exports in the just-concluded financial year have risen substantially, though with a low base.

The other countries in the Top 10 list are the UK, Australia, Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, and South Africa. India's overall exports, merchandise and services combined, in the just-concluded financial year 2023-24 are estimated to be USD 776.68 billion, largely steady on a yearly basis, commerce ministry data showed on Monday.

In break up, exports of merchandise goods declined 3.1 per cent to USD 437.06 billion, and exports of services rose 4.4 per cent to USD 339.62 billion.

Coming to exports in March 2024, merchandise exports declined 0.7 per cent to USD 41.68 billion, and services exports declined 6.3 per cent to USD 28.54 billion.

India's overall exports 2022-23 were worth USD 775.87 billion, a growth of over 14 per cent and almost USD 100 billion on a yearly basis.

Coming to imports, India's overall imports in 2023-24 declined 4.8 per cent to USD 854.80 billion. In March 2024, merchandise and services exports declined 5.41 per cent and 2.46 per cent, respectively.

Among various steps the government took was to launch a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme in varied sectors, including electronic goods, to make Indian manufacturers globally competitive, attract investments, enhance exports, integrate India into the global supply chain and reduce dependency on imports. *—ANI*

IMF lauds India's fiscal discipline

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

The International Monetary Fund has applauded India for maintaining fiscal discipline in an election year, saying that the Indian economy is doing well and continues to be the world's bright spot.

"At this point in time, India's economy is doing well. Growth at 6.8 per cent is very good. Inflation's coming down. We have to make sure that inflation comes down to target and it is there on a durable basis. Macro fundamentals look pretty good," Krishna Srinivasan, Director, Asia and Pacific Department, at the IMF said.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.98 billion to a fresh peak of USD 648.562 billion for the week ended April 5. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by USD 2.951 billion to USD 645.583 billion, which was an all-time high. *—PTI*

Pre-owned car sales jump 87 per cent in B'luru

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Bengaluru is leading a significant shift in India's automotive scenario, with a growing number of residents opting for pre-owned vehicles. Spearheaded by CARS24, India's premier AutoTech Company, the City has seen an impressive 87 per cent growth in used car sales year on year. This trend highlights Bengaluru's move towards more affordable and intelligent vehicle ownership options, catering to both budget-conscious and environmentally aware consumers. The rise in popularity of used cars in Bengaluru reflects a practical approach to mobility, where quality and value meet sustainability. *—PTI*

Infosys shares decline nearly 3 pc after Q4 earnings; mcap drops by Rs 9,549.6 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Infosys expects revenue growth of 3 per in FY25 *PHOTO: PTI*

Shares of Infosys on Friday declined nearly 3 per cent after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations. The stock dipped 2.87 per cent to Rs 1,379.70 on the BSE.

On the NSE, it went lower 2.85 per cent to Rs 1,378.75. Its market capitalisation (mcap) declined Rs 9,549.6 crore to Rs 5, 80,042.22 crore in the morning trade.

IT company Infosys on Thursday said its consolidated profit jumped 30 per cent to Rs 7,969 crore in the March 2024 quarter.

The company posted a profit of Rs 6,128 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing.

The consolidated revenue of Infosys during the quarter increased 1.3 per cent to Rs 37,923 crore from Rs 37,441 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The growth projection is lower compared to the outlook of between 4 per cent and 7 per cent for FY24

The company expects a revenue growth of 1-3 per cent in constant currency for FY25 and an operating margin of 20-22 per cent. *—PTI*

- NSE, it went lower 2.85 per cent to Rs 1,378.75. Its market capitalisation (mcap) declined Rs 9,549.6 crore to Rs 5, 80,042.22 crore in the morning trade

INFY SHARES

5-month-old Ekagrah Murty to earn Rs 4.2 cr with dividends

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

NR Narayana Murthy *PHOTO: PTI*

- On Thursday, the Infosys board recommended a final dividend of Rs 20 per share and additionally a special dividend of Rs 8 per share for the financial year 2024

Ekagrah Rohan Murty, NR Narayana Murthy's five-month-old grandson who was gifted a whopping 15 lakh shares by the Infosys founder recently, is set to earn Rs 4.20 crore, thanks to Bengaluru-IT company declaring a bumper final and special dividend totalling Rs 28 per share.

Murthy had gifted 15 lakh shares to Ekagrah valued at a staggering Rs 240 crore at that time, making the five-month-old the youngest millionaire shareholder of India's second-largest IT Company.

On Thursday, the Infosys board recommended a final dividend of Rs 20 per share and additionally a special dividend of Rs 8 per share for the financial year 2024.

"With this, the total pay-out over FY20-FY24 will be 85 per cent of free cash flow, in line with our capital allocation policy announced earlier," Infosys said in its Q4 earnings release.

The record date for the purpose of the annual general meeting and payment of final dividend and special dividend is May 31, 2024. The dividend will be paid on July 1, 2024, Infosys informed.

Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that with the dividend at the rate of Rs 28 per share, youngest millionaire Ekagrah is set to earn Rs 4.2 crore.

Ekagrah - the third grandchild of Narayana Murthy - is the son of Rohan Murty and his wife Aparna Krishnan.

His first two grandchildren are daughters of Akshata Murty and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. *—PTI*

Pant set for emotional homecoming for DC

The last time Pant was seen at the refurbished Arun Jaitley Stadium

Rishabh Pant PHOTO: PTI

MANCHESTER, 18 APRIL

The last time Pant was seen at the refurbished stadium, he needed crutches to walk but that now seems a distant memory given how remarkably well he has managed to come back both as a wicketkeeper and batter after enduring a life-threatening car accident in 2022.Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix.

In all, they have three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far.Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad has set a different template altogether with two of the highest-ever totals of 277/3 and 287/3, which will require a lot of heart and skill to counter.

Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a track that will have good bounce and carry for a change. Travis Head (235 runs) -- IPL's foreign flavor of the season -- will be keen to build on his 39-ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover either. Both have a penchant for taking the aerial route during powerplay.

Head and Abhishek's intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for the pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed, and Mukesh Kumar. Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen, who is also striking at 199, who is one of the best finishers in international cricket with a propensity to hit balls out of the stadium, which gives SRH's batting a scary look.But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist spin could well prove to be a game-changer and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin option alongside Axar Patel (6.75).Pant, who is himself getting back to the top of his game, wouldn't mind if he could win the toss and opt to bat.But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches. While SRH's batting has been top-notch on belters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than eight runs per over, which is considered good in T20.However, the seasoned duo of Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and Bhuvneshwar (10.45), have both been average while the tweakers wrist spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) have been sent on a leather hunt.The best option for Pant would be to open the batting and go for the jugular against SRH, putting scoreboard pressure on the rampaging Orange Army.In case Capitals have to chase, the idea would be to keep SRH down to 210-220 which would be chaseable against an attack that may not be able to hold its own on a good batting track. —PTI

TODAY'S MATCH

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

DELHI CAPITALS vs SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi

CANDIDATES CHESS

Teenaged Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh PHOTO: PTI

Gukesh crushes Abasov to be back in joint lead

TORONTO, 18 APRIL

Teenaged Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh produced another fantastic performance to crash through the defenses of Azerbaijan's Nijat Abasov and regain a share of the lead but R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi bowed out of contention after the 12th round of the Candidates chess tournament here.With American Hikaru Nakamura scoring a victory over Firouza Alireza of France, it is now a three-way lead at the top.

Gukesh and Nakamura joined overnight top-placed Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who drew with Praggnanandhaa, on 7.5 points and these three are now followed by Fabiano Caruana of the United States who is on seven points.Praggnanandhaa is still fifth with six points with Gujrathi following him on five points.However, with just two rounds to come in the eight-player double round-robin tournament, it is almost impossible for the duo to finish on the podium. Alireza and Abasov fill up the rear of the table with 4.5 and three points respectively.

In the women's section, the Chinese domination was cemented by Zhongyi Tan, who played out a draw with Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria. Russian Kateryna Lagno was only able to squeeze half a point against another Chinese Tingjie Lei.India's Koneru Humpy did well to hold Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia to a draw while R Vaishali scored her second straight victory at the expense of Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

With Tan on eight points, Lei is half a point behind. The trio of Humpy, Lagno, and Goryachkina are a distant third on six points. Vaishali moved to 5.5 points to take the sixth spot, ahead of Salimova and Muzychuk.The 17-year-old Gukesh is only the second youngest in history to ever compete in a Candidates tournament and the last time someone younger played was way back in 1959. —PTI

PHOTO: AFP

Runner Shalu Chaudhary cleared of doping charges

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

EThe National Anti-Doping Agency's appeals panel has exonerated middle-distance runner Shalu Chaudhary of doping charges and lifted her four-year ban after DNA testing revealed that her urine sample had either been tampered with or contaminated at the time of collection. The 30-year-old Chaudhary was banned last year after she lost her appeal to NADA's disciplinary panel. She was suspended for the alleged use of two substances including a stimulant and peptide hormones. The runner, who is a national-level medallist in 800m, subsequently sought DNA testing of her urine sample, a plea that was rejected by the disciplinary committee but accepted by the appeals panel. The DNA testing was eventually conducted at the Forensics Department of King's College, London. "The A and B samples from the previously analyzed urine sample produced extremely poor partial DNA profiles, presenting as a mixture of two female individuals in similar proportions," the appeals panel order stated. The order further stated that "in the light of the DNA sample report, the counsel for NADA is not able to point out any other factor which would persuade the Appeal Panel to reject the case of the athlete." —PTI

PHOTO: AFP

Esha Singh and Bhavesh take Day One honours

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Esha Singh topped the women's 25m pistol qualification while Bhavesh Shekhawat led the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol charts on day one of the Olympic Selection Trials here on Friday. Esha totaled 585 across her precision and rapid-fire rounds in the women's sport pistol T1 qualification, to steer two points clear of Simranpreet Kaur Brar, who finished second. Manu Bhaker (582) was a close third while Abhidnya Patil (577) and Rhythm Sangwan (574) were fourth and fifth respectively at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range. In the men's rapid-fire pistol, Bhavesh (580) took the top billing as he was rewarded for being the most consistent shooter.—PTI

PHOTO: AFP

Nagelsmann to remain football coach till 2026

PARIS, 19 APRIL

German national team coach Julian Nagelsmann has signed a contract extension to remain in post until at least the 2026 World Cup, the German Football Association (DFB) said Friday."This is a decision from the heart. It is a great honor to coach the national team," Nagelsmann said in a statement.The announcement comes just a few weeks before Germany is set to host the 2024 European Championships in June and July.—PTI

Injuries don't define you: Shami

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Veteran Indian pacer Mohammed Shami on Friday shared the progress of his rehabilitation process a surgery on his Achilles tendon, stressing his strong desire to return to the field at the earliest.Shami played through last year's ODI World Cup braving the pain, finishing the tournament as the highest wicket-taker with 24 scalps.

But since the final against Australia, the 33-year-old has been completely sidelined with the injury.Eventually, he underwent the surgery in February."Injuries don't define you, your comeback will. Can't wait to be back out there with my team!"

Shami posted on his Instagram handle accompanied by a video which showed him amid a procedure Since the World Cup, Shami has missed out on playing against Australia in a T20I series, the tour to South Africa, and home assignments against Afghanistan (T20I) and England (Test).The surgery on his ankle meant that Shami also could not feature in the IPL 2024 for Gujarat Titans for whom he has captured 48 wickets from 33 matches across 2022 and 2023.

With him missing the entire IPL, it's highly unlikely that Shami will feature in India's squad for the T20 World Cup in June. —PTI

Veteran Indian pacer Mohammed Shami on Friday shared the progress of his rehabilitation process PHOTO: PTI

EFL representatives accepted scrapping FA Cup replays

LONDON, 19 APRIL

English Football League (EFL) representatives agreed in meetings that FA Cup replays should be scrapped from next season, the English FA said on Friday in the face of criticism from several lower-league clubs for ditching the revenue-generating matches.

English football's governing body announced the move on Thursday as part of a six-year agreement with the top-flight Premier League to strengthen the domestic Cup competition.

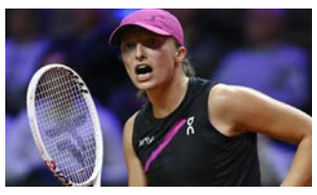
"We have been discussing the calendar for the 2024-25 season with the Premier League and EFL for well over a year," the FA said in a statement.

"Removing Emirates FA Cup replays was discussed in the early meetings and all parties accepted that they could not continue."

The statement comes in the wake of multiple lower-league clubs as well as EFL chief executive Trevor Birch criticizing the move, which denies smaller clubs drawn at home to top-tier opposition the chance to earn revenue through money-spinning replays away.

"It does kick everyone in the teeth below (the top flight). There's nothing we can do about it, apart from voice our concerns," Mark Robins, manager of Championship side Coventry City, said ahead of Sunday's FA Cup semi-final with Manchester United.

PHOTO: PTI



Iga Swiatek PHOTO: PTI

SWIATEK BEATS MERTENS

PARIS, 19 APRIL

Top-seeded Iga Swiatek beat Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-4 to advance to the Porsche Grand Prix quarterfinals on Thursday.

The top-ranked Swiatek will face next Emma Raducanu, who knocked out Linda Noskova 6-0, 7-5.

Earlier, fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina battled her way into the quarterfinals in a roller coaster 7-6 (3), 1-6, 6-4 victory over Veronika Kudermetova.

Rybakina managed to stave off three break points toward the end of the opening set and then took control of the tie-breaker. —AP

We are behind schedule in training: Jaspal Rana

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Legendary pistol marksman Jaspal Rana has expressed grave concerns over the delay in naming the Indian shooting contingent for the Paris Olympics, saying it will leave the selected shooters with little time for the final phase of preparations.

Several countries, including the US and Italy, and many European powerhouses have announced their squads and their shooters are in the final phase of fine-tuning their skills and programs for the Olympics, even as India commenced its nearly month-long exercise on Friday.

The top-five ranked shooters in the pistol and rifle category will undergo four trials April 19-27 (New Delhi, trials 1 & 2) and May 10-19 (Bhopal, trials 3 & 4) and the selection for Paris will be done after that, leaving precious little time for the last phase of training.The Paris Olympics will commence on July 26.The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has completed the trials in shotgun events, but they are yet to announce the squad in the hope that a few more shooters might secure Paris quotas in the Final Olympic Qualification Championship, which started in Doha on Friday." We are not in the same category of training and preparation as other people are getting around the world. They (strong countries in shooting sport) have already selected their teams and started their training and we are behind schedule," said Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee shooter Rana in harsh comments against the NRAI's policy."Nobody knows so far who is going and who is not going. That puts a lot of pressure on the players who have won quota places, while those who have not won the quota places there is a lot less pressure," added the four-time Asian Games gold medallist, who is currently the personal coach of Olympian Manu Bhaker.—PTI

Jaspal Rana PHOTO: PTI

BAYER LEVERKUSEN IN EUROPA LEAGUE SEMI-FINALS

NYON, 19 APRIL

Newly-crowned Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen reached the Europa League semi-finals on Thursday and stretched their undefeated run in all competitions this season to 44 matches. The German side drew 1-1 at West Ham in the second leg of their quarter-final tie and went through 3-1 on aggregate.

Michail Antonio put West Ham ahead on 13 minutes before Jeremie Frimpong leveled in the 89th minute for Xabi Alonso's side. Leverkusen will face Roma for a place in the final.

"I think we felt it in the first half, for me, it was a typical English crowd. They were pushing West Ham unbelievably. We were lucky in the first half if we're honest," Leverkusen midfielder Granit Xhaka told TNT Sports.

"It was a different phase in the second half, we controlled the game. We are happy we got through.

"We competed much more. If you see over 180 minutes, the better team goes through." —AP

DIRECT QUALIFICATION

Goa host Chennaiyin FC in high-stakes knockout battle

MARGAO, 19 APRIL

With a direct qualification to the semifinals hanging in the balance, FC Goa host Chennaiyin FC in a high-stakes knockout battle of the Indian Super League here on Saturday.On recent form, FC Goa enters the fixture on the back of an impressive run (45 points from their 22 matches), having secured victories in four out of their last five matches. Their commanding performance against Chennaiyin FC in their recent face-off, where they emerged triumphant with a 4-1 scoreline, underscores their current form and confidence. Contrastingly, Chennaiyin FC, despite experiencing a setback in their previous fixture against FC Goa, has demonstrated resilience throughout the season. With wins in three of their last five matches, they are poised to bounce back and pose a formidable challenge to their opponents.FC Goa fare well against Chennaiyin FC, having won five of their last six matches against them, and keeping a clean sheet in four of those victories.The Gaurs have found the back of the net in each of their previous 14 matches against the Marina Machans, and only against Kerala Blasters FC do have a longer active scoring streak, i.e. of 19 games.

FC Goa now have won four matches in a row, and their last longer run like this was a stretch of five matches from January to February 2020. Their 52 strikes against Chennaiyin FC are the most goals that a team has netted against any opposition in the ISL. They put up an absolute show in the last match, and one can expect similar fireworks, or at least intent to pull off the same in the forthcoming fixture as well. —PTI

FC Goa's direct qualification to the semifinals hanging in the balance PHOTO: PTI